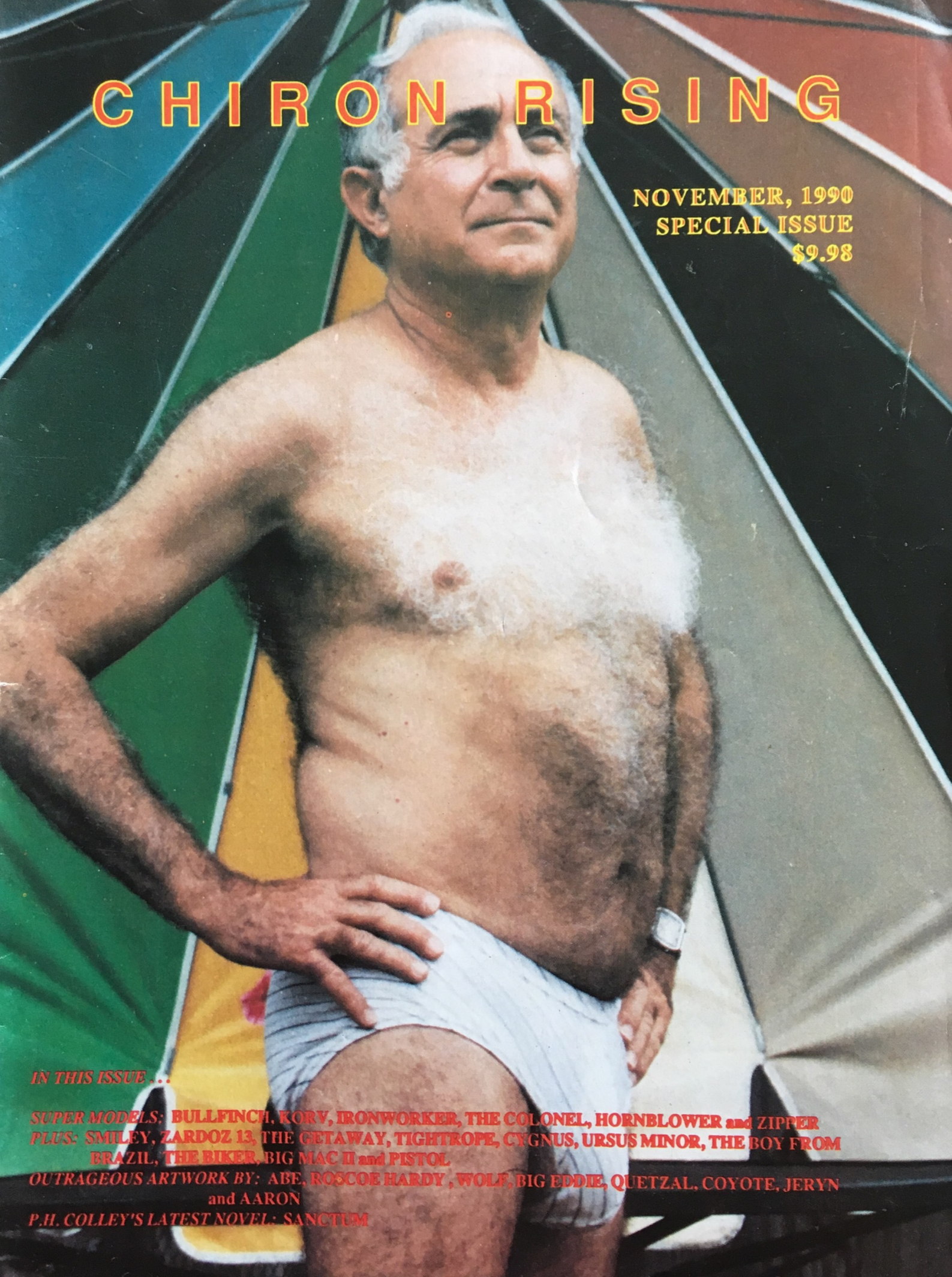


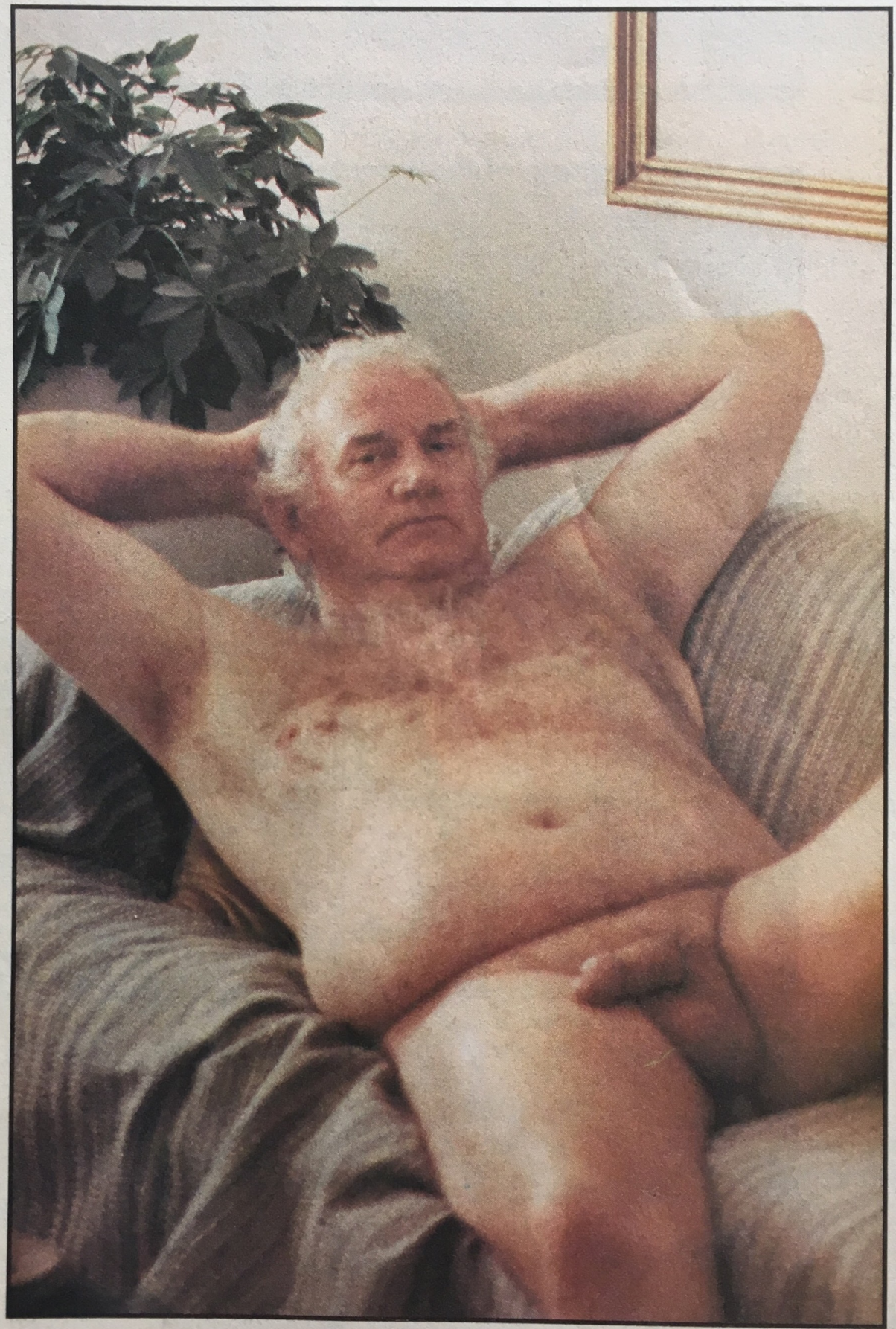
CHIRON RISING

NOVEMBER, 1990
SPECIAL ISSUE
$9.98

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

SUPER MODELS: BULLFINCH, KORV, IRONWORKER, THE COLONEL, HORNBLOWER and ZIPPER
PLUS: SMILEY, ZARDOZ 13, THE GETAWAY, TIGHTROPE, CYGNUS, URSUS MINOR, THE BOY FROM BRAZIL, THE BIKER, BIG MAC II and PISTOL
OUTRAGEOUS ARTWORK BY: ABE, ROSCOE HARDY , WOLF, BIG EDDIE, QUETZAL, COYOTE, JERYN and AARON
P.H. COLLEY'S LATEST NOVEL: SANCTUM

ZIPPER



ZIPPER is one of the most popular models whe've ever presented. Ever since we published his black and white, nude photo in the February 90 issue, readers have demanded color nude shots. So feast your eyes, gentlemen. ZIPPER lives in the Palm Springs area with his partner, model NIPPER.

PHOTOS BY P.H. COLLEY

PLEASE NOTE

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THOSE MATURE MEN AND THEIR MALE ADMIRERS WHO SEEK ENTERTAINMENT WHICH GLORIFIES SOCIAL, SPIRITUAL AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ADULT MALES. IF YOU ARE UNDER 21 OR OFFENDED BY SUCH MATERIAL, PLEASE READ NO FURTHER!

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR
Patrick H. Colley

BIG BOSS
The Friar

WRITERS/ARTISTS/
PHOTOGRAPHERS/MODELS
Our Subscribers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FRONT COVER: BULLFINCH . . . photo by KENT JUSTICE
2 ZIPPER
6 GREETINGS
7 SANCTUM . . . a novel by P.H. COLLEY
12 ABE UNLEASHED
18 IRONWORKER
26 INTERNATIONAL MODELS
34 ROSCOE HARDIE
35 WOLF
42 BIG EDDIE
50 QUETZAL
58 CYGNUS
66 MATURE AND HOT
74 COYOTE
75 JERYN
80 AARON
81 KORV
BACK COVER: PISTOL . . . a self portrait

COVER PROFILES

BULLFINCH is 61, 5-'7", 155# and one of the most sizzling models KENT JUSTICE has ever come up with. He's a retired engineer, lives in the Midwest and is free to travel. BULLFINCH is looking for a sincere relationship-oriented fellow, 21-50, who enjoys life and togetherness.

PISTOL is a 38-year-old, 5'-9", 200# North Carolinian who loves big, short, stocky, hairy bears. A nonsmoker/drinker, PISTOL is warm and affectionate toward Bob Hoskins/Ed Asner types and loves sports, music and movies.

G R E E T I N G S !

For those of you who were looking forward to RADER's illustrations, we regret to advise that the artist abruptly pulled out of the project, ostensibly over creative differences with your editor. Unfortunately, he advised us of this revelation very late in the game, so there was no opportunity to change our ad in the October 90 issue.

In order to offset any major dissapointment, we have compensated by adding a lot more photos than we originally planned. As a result, we have come up with one hell of an opus and sincerely hope that you thoroughly enjoy it.

For the benefit of our new readers, we'd like to reiterate our purpose in publishing the special issues. Because of the variety of obscenity laws throughout the world (it seems that no one can adequately define the term "obscene"), and since many of our readers prefer less sexually explicit material, our regular issues are crafted accordingly. For those readers who do enjoy more provocative photo and artwork entertainment, we publish an average of two special issues a year and offer them separately to a select readership. Although the special issues have artistic purpose and are not considered pornographic by federal standards, they are deemed "indecent" in certain other countries and could be close to the edge in a handful of states dominated by the religious right. And of course, the religious right just loves to dictate community standards of decency to everyone. For that reason, we avoid selling special issues to anyone but subscribers in the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Nebraska, Texas, Tennessee and Utah. We will take every precaution necessary to keep these issues from getting into the hands of minors or those adults who would be offended.

This is the second special which features a full length novel by yours truly. If it is received well, we'll follow with two more finished works, probably in March and September. All my novels are virtually free of gay political rhetoric and place older men/lovers of older men in central roles. My works depict male characters of every age, color, shape and degree of sexual diversity--men we can all identify with. I enjoy exposing the dynamism and flexibility of sexual preference and take great delight in characterizing the late coming out of a senior man or the seduction of testosterone-reeking, predominantly heterosexual brutes.

Unfortunately this sort of fiction isn't endearing to the polarized book publishers. The straight presses prefer to continue depicting non-heterosexuals as perverts and the gay presses have this preoccupation with youth, trendiness, radical chic, bitchiness and the politics of AIDS. Consequently, the only gay or lesbian books for or about mature people are those "clinical" works about aging and retirement. Little space is ever devoted to the sexual habits of gay and lesbian seniors. Apparently we mature types aren't supposed to have sex.

The highly visible owner of a gay book publisher once told me (off the record, after his editors "reluctantly" turned down two of my novels for publication) that older people don't buy that much erotic fiction and that there is absolutely no market for books featuring older, sexually active characters. I reminded him that CR has proven the existence of such a market, but he didn't seem to be that impressed. Determined to make an impression, I pissed him off with a prediction that I would self-publish through CR and sell more copies than his average release . . . that there *is* a market and he'll eventually kick himself for not realizing it.

Although I've never been published outside SWAN and CHIRON RISING, I've learned from heavy exposure how the publishing companies operate. I've submitted works to publishers for over 20 years and have a file bulging with rejections--some kind and helpful, some curt and egocidal. Driven, I plodded ahead, reading every book on writing I could get my hands on, becoming my harshest critic. One day recently it occurred to me that the rejection letters had begun to change. They were typed letters, not forms. Moreover, they were being signed by senior editors, who expressed ambivalence and admitted that they'd had my novel read by outside sources to aid them in making a decision. Close, but no cigar.

Last year, I finally landed publishers for two novels, but the celebration didn't last long. The first publisher sent a contract, which I signed, then demanded that I re-write the novel, which I did. Then the publisher hired another editor, who got off to a rousing start by demanding yet another re-write. About the time I successfully got out of the contract, another publisher agreed to do the other novel, provided I *help finance the project*. But the worst insult came when one of the biggest, most prestigious publishers in the country *asked* to read both novels. Six months later and my calls and letters go unanswered. Small wonder that some of the best and most promising writers give up and go into other fields.

But not this writer! The following novel is therefore dedicated to CR's subscribers and supporters who are making its publication possible. May our brotherhood endure forever.

With Love,
Patrick H. Colley, Publisher/Editor

S A N C T U M

a novel by

Patrick H. Colley

ONE

Houston, Summer of 1983

Clay sat on the edge of the bed, studying his blond-fringed silhouette in the dresser mirror. A bolt of lightning struck blocks away, illuminating the room, exposing his hard, sweaty torso and flaccid, Vaseline-smeared penis. He winced as the thunder cracked, instinctively lifting his feet off the floor, just like he and his siblings had done thirty years ago.

"Jesus Christ!" yelled Michelle from the shower.

Clay looked toward the bathroom door and felt a growing resentment toward her. Not bothering to get into his robe, he walked downstairs and poured a brandy. In the darkness he opened the drapes covering his terrace door and watched the flashes of lightning.

For the first time in his life, he felt anxious about the fleetness of life. At 36, he'd become bored with his inconsequential existence and began to toy with darker fantasies: those which offered ecstasy to his jaded libido, yet threatened to emasculate him.

Clay looked like the stereotypical California surfer, even though he was born in Weatherford, Texas and never set foot on California soil—or a surfboard. Married and divorced twice after coming back from Viet Nam, he eventually vowed a moratorium on marriage, swearing never to go to the altar again. A highly decorated Navy Seal, he made it back from the war with only two minor flesh wounds. Without the emotional scars and addiction of so many of his peers, he somehow felt cheated . . . *guilty?* Having nothing in common with the other veterans, he stopped telling of his hitch in Viet Nam, finally explaining to those who asked that he'd been 4F and was never in the service. He came across as quiet and mysterious, even to Michelle, his roommate.

"Clay?" Michelle called from upstairs.

He ignored her, fascinated with the lit-up sky.

She came down the stairs dressed in a robe, her red hair brilliant against the white terry cloth. She was 23, voluptuous and very much aware of the advantages of being beautiful and sensuous. Pouring herself a glass of sherry, she joined him.

"Storm's moving away now," he offered.

"Why didn't you answer me?" she purred, snuggling against him.

"I didn't hear you," he lied.

"I wish you wouldn't get so upset, Clay," she said, kissing the back of his neck.

"Who's upset?" He let the drapes close and sat on a love seat.

"Maybe you should see a doctor," she said softly. "Maybe it's something physical."

"He'll say it's in my head."

"Then see a urologist. They have treatments."

"I'll get over it. Nothing to worry about, provided . . . "

"Clay, it's getting *worse*," she interrupted.

" . . . provided you *stop harping on it*," he added emphatically. He tried to block her out of his mind—to relive the events of just a few hours earlier. He wanted to feel that warm wetness enveloping his cock, wanted to feel his cock ache as it swelled with tumescence.

She sighed. "I'm going to bed. It's late."

As her footfalls reached the top of the stairs, his cock lurched. He focused on the memory of that phantom mouth behind the hole. *Hot . . . hot . . . so hot. Wet and . . . .* His cock filled his hand, throbbing. *Toothless . . . . Oh, shit . . . .*

"Oh, shit," he whispered. Semen spilled over his abdomen.

TWO

The Following Morning

Clay couldn't believe his eyes. He measured the freshly poured concrete wall again. "Oh, my God." He turned and saw the concrete superintendent standing nearby, watching a group of workers

finishing a wet slab of concrete.

"Hey, Jigs!" yelled Clay, waving a drawing above his head.

The tall, lanky superintendent looked up, then walked toward Clay, meeting him half way.

"Jigs, the wall's off by two inches."

"You're full of shit," grumbled Jigs, taking the drawing and looking at the dimension. He pulled out his tape and measured the wall. Quickly, he looked at the drawing again, then measured again, his face turning red. "Fuck!"

"You promised me you'd measure the forms, Jigs," said Clay. He was furious and fought the urge to punch the man.

The superintendent shrugged. "Can't do nothing now 'cept tear the fucker down and do it over." He walked away.

"It's my responsibility, Jigs. I trusted you." Clay watched as Jigs threw up his hands. "It's my ass, you idiot!" Clay ran after the man, grabbing his arm roughly. He knew that he could kill the superintendent with one punch.

Jigs turned and looked at Clay's grip on his arm. "Okay, tough-black-belt-Viet-Nam-vet . . . hit me." He smiled. "Hit me and I'll see your ass in jail."

Clay let go of Jig's arm and headed for the field office. He knew the rules and realized that he was in serious trouble.

The construction manager was a short, wiry man with hateful eyes. He was in his early sixties with a bulbous nose and eyes so bloodshot that he wore dark glasses at all times. He reeked of alcohol and sour body odor. Worse, he detested Clay.

Clay walked into the manager's office and sat heavily in a chair. "The wall they just poured is half an inch off." Clay could barely see the manager's eyes, but felt their intensity. Then the man's lips announced his reaction with a smile. "Jig said that he wanted to measure the forms, so I let him."

"You're off the job, Pascal," said the manager with a gurgling voice, his throat full of phlegm.

"It was an innocent mistake . . . "

"You know the rules." The manager picked up the phone and dialed a three-digit number. He coughed up something from deep within his lungs and lit a cigarette. "Yeah, Martin here. Get Pascal's check ready." He glanced up at Clay. "He's about ready to hit the road." He hung up the receiver, grinning. "You can pick your check up at personnel." He began working at his desk.

"Are you sure you want to do this to me?" Clay's voice was dry and raspy, full of menace.

"You're not gonna threaten me, are you, boy?" Martin took off his glasses, exposing red, deranged-looking eyes. "If you walk out of here right now, you might con your asshole buddy v.p. downtown into getting you on another jobsite. But if you fuck with me, I'll see to it that you never get on another job for this company. You *comprende*, motherfucker?"

"Always look over your shoulder, Martin." Clay got to his feet and glowered at him. "When you least expect it, I'll be there." Swiftly, Clay grabbed Martin's cigarette and threw it into a cup of coffee on the desk.

Martin fumbled for the telephone and dialed another number as Clay slowly left the office, closing the door behind him.

"Security?" The manager yelled. "This is Martin. We got a man makin' threats over here. I want him escorted off the jobsite . . . . NOW!"

Three young female clerks stared at Cliff as he turned and savagely kicked Martin's door off its hinges. He nodded at the clerks and left the building.

By the time the two security guards caught up with him, Clay had already picked up his check and was near the main gate. Aware of Clay's martial arts proficiency, both guards stopped well away from him and placed hands upon their gun holsters.

Clay looked back and smiled. "Don't shoot, officers. I'm going, I'm going." He laughed and headed for his 1981 Ford pickup, relieved that he wouldn't have to work for Martin any more. *No big deal*, he thought. *Maybe I'll get an overseas job. Maybe Alaska. Maybe Wyoming or Louisiana or West Texas. Shit, jobs are a dime a dozen right now.*

Parking his pickup in the stall underneath his apartment, he spotted Michelle on the nearby terrace of a young male neighbor who worked nights. Since he'd already had a confrontation with the neighbor over a loud stereo, Clay was surprised to see his roommate leaning over the young man, spreading suntan lotion over his muscular chest, oblivious to Clay's stare from below.

At first he was furious, but reason prevailed. *Wasn't I dreading eventually having to ask her to leave? After all, she's a financial drain and the sex isn't anywhere near what it was.* He put on a naive face and got out of the pickup, pretending not to notice what was going on. Walking up the stairway within twenty feet of the suddenly terror-striken couple, Clay entered the rear of his apartment through the sliding glass door, immediately turning to watch from behind the drapes. Michelle and the young man had disappeared inside.

Clay showered and sprayed himself with a fashionable cologne—"that gay cologne," as Michelle had always chided him. Dressing in tight white jeans with no underwear, cowboy boots, a Chicago Bears football jersey and a bright orange ball cap, he wrote a "get out" note to Michelle and left, glancing vicariously at his young neighbor's apartment window, imagining Michelle's anxious expression.

As he did the last fight with Michelle, Clay drove east on Interstate 610, finally turning south on the Gulf Freeway. The adult bookstore/arcade stood on the service road to his right, beckoning him like the first time three months ago. Again his pulse quickened and his cock stirred. It was the same as each of the previous six visits. It got to the point that he would pick a fight with Michelle just to justify another visit.

The parking lot was full, prompting him to look at his watch. It was one in the afternoon, probably too late to find older men. Through trial and error, he'd determined that older and more masculine men—his preference— usually came in during the morning between ten and noon. Now, there would be an abundance of younger men inside. "Shit," he grumbled. He sighed and glanced down at the bulge in his crotch. "No. Gotta have *something*."

Inside, the dark maze fascinated him and revolted him

at the same time. He stood against a wall in the dimness, waiting for his eyes to dilate. Silhouettes moved by him; he could feel all the dark-adjusted eyes sizing him up, gauging him. Enclosure doors opened and closed; tiny red lights above the doors turned on and off. Someone stood next to him and touched his leg lightly with a delicate, trembling hand. Clay shuddered and moved to the opposite wall, fifty feet away.

Soon, his vision improved well enough to see that virtually all of the men inside were younger or "queeny," a term he used with contempt. He detested men who used mannerisms or dress to advertise their sexual preference—especially younger men. To those types, he was absolutely straight. There was no way he would allow that kind of man to touch him. With older, masculine men, however, he was agreeable to passive oral sex. With *brawny*, older, masculine men, the situation became complicated.

Although he'd never been intimate with such a man, he began fantasizing such a tryst upon returning from Viet Nam with fond memories of Chief Maxson. The powerfully built navy chief had taken Clay under his tutorship, ultimately becoming a surrogate father. For sixteen years Clay nurtured those memories and never once considered himself bisexual—certainly not gay. He continued having sex with woman after woman, but, when he masturbated, the stimulus was always Chief Maxson, grabbing Clay's cock and ass, draping his huge arm around Clay's shoulder. All that changed the night he dreamed of being seduced by a slightly matured version of Chief Maxson, who buried a short, thick cock down Clay's throat, causing him to climax in his sleep. That was four months ago, after his first taste of male-to-male sex in another bookstore up on the north side. He was drunk and there was a hole in the wall and it was so quick and exciting.

A short, stocky man walked by, glancing at Clay with a smoldering look. As Clay watched him disappear down the dark corridor, he saw that the man had receding gray hair and wore construction boots. He looked familiar—a factor that made Clay hesitate. Finally convincing himself that the man wasn't a co-worker, he followed the boots into a darker and narrower hallway, which had enclosures on both sides. The stocky man walked into the last booth on the left and dropped a coin in the projector. Seeing that the light above the adjacent door wasn't illuminated, Clay went into that enclosure and locked the door. Feeling self-conscious, he knelt and looked through the large hole in the wall separating the booths. The stocky man stood stroking a short, thick cock; he suddenly pushed it the hole, poking Clay's cheek. Clay fell backwards, frantically wiping away a drop of pre-cum.

At first, Clay felt revolted, but sensed a creeping, confusing ambivalence. Rising from the filthy, cum-sticky floor, he stared at the eye in the hole. Then he saw the man's finger, beckoning. Only then did Clay notice that his own penis was painfully engorged and drooling. He unbuttoned his jeans and quickly sent his cock through the hole to a waiting, hungry mouth.

"Oh, yeah," whispered the man in the next booth. "Uhhhmm, yes."

Clay pressed himself against the wall, attempting to offer every inch of his ample penis.

The man groaned louder.

Licking his dry lips, the vivid image came alive in Clay's mind. He fantasized sucking the chief's thick cock with abandon, relishing the exotic taste of the phantom pre-cum. As the chief came in his mouth, his own imaginary load sprayed over the chief's spit-shined shoes. His real load shot into the stocky man's mouth.

"Gunnnng . . . Uhhhmmm . . ." The man responded frantically.

Clay felt the man's mouth tighten around his pulsing cock, obviously swallowing again and again to make room for more semen. Clay likewise swallowed, imagining the taste of a virile man's cum.

"Oh, Jesus . . . Oh, yes," whispered the man. "What a load . . . "

What a load, thought Clay, feeling giddy.

Sitting in the darkness, allowing his cock to completely drain and dry, Clay realized for the first time that he was through with women. It was just a matter of time before he met the man who would convert him for good. After that, he would never be the same again.

He accepted it—looked forward to it, yet dreaded it.

Having stopped off for some beers at three different bars, he arrived at his apartment just before midnight. Michelle was sitting on the living room couch, watching television and smoking a cigarette. Her mouth pouted in a hurt expression, but her eyes flashed hostility.

He saw the ashtray, which was full of cigarette butts. "Guess you thought I wasn't serious, huh?"

"Are you?" she whispered, her voice quavering.

"Yeah," he said, walking into the kitchen for another beer. His shoulder hit the doorway to the kitchen.

"You're drunk," Michelle pointed out.

Clay opened a bottle and returned to the kitchen doorway. "I wasn't drunk when I wrote the note, darlin'." He took a swig and stared at her.

"Why?" she asked, shaking her head in dismay.

"I saw you before I came up the stairs this afternoon, Michelle." He sighed and fell into a chair.

"Saw me where?" she asked innocently.

He rolled his eyes and looked away from her.

She cleared her throat nervously. "It wasn't what it looked like, Clay," she said softly. "Sometimes I go over there just to talk. It's boring around here during the day."

"Jesus, Michelle," he countered. "Your tits were hanging out over his face. Hell, he was looking at those jugs like he'd had them in his mouth a hundred times!" He chuckled. "Please!" He held up his hands and frowned. "Please, don't play me for a fool, okay? Just . . . just get the fuck out, please. No fighting, no tears—just quietly leave."

She stared at him in disbelief, finally savagely crushing her cigarette out in the ashtray, sending butts over the end table. She got up and walked to the stairway. "You got it, stud. I have plenty of places to go." She stormed up the stairs.

"Maybe you can bunk with old 'pimple face' next door!"

"Fuck you!" she shrieked from the top of the stairs.

Relieved, he laughed and started cleaning up the cigarette butts.

As he sat nodding at the television, a car horn sounded from outside. Michelle came down the stairs with a medium-sized suitcase and walked briskly to the front door. She'd been crying and her eyes were puffy.

She opened the door and turned to him. "A couple of guys came by this afternoon looking for you. I think they were cops."

He studied her, wondering if she were lying. "What'd they look like?"

"Like FBI agents. Said they'd be by tomorrow." She glared at him. "I hope they throw your ass in jail." Proud of her parting shot, she left, slamming the door.

He chuckled and celebrated her departure by cooking himself bacon and eggs.

THREE

The Following Morning

The sound of the door bell reached Clay's conscious mind, interrupting an erotic dream about Chief Maxson. For what seemed like hours, he and the chief had been searching for a private place within the bowels of an aircraft carrier. Every time that Clay would attempt to go down on the chief's massive cock, someone would enter the room, almost catching them in the act. He awakened frustrated and angry.

The door bell downstairs persisted; he assumed that it was Michelle and considered turning over and going back to sleep. A knock accompanied the door bell, urging him to get out of bed and look down from his bedroom window. He rubbed his eyes and peered at two men dressed in suits. Opening the window, he was hit with hot, sultry air and bright sunlight. His head began to hurt.

The two men looked for the source of the sound.

"Yes?" asked Clay.

"Mister Pascal?" asked one of the men.

"That's right. Uhh . . . " He glanced around for his robe. "I'll be right down."

Clay staggered down the stairs and opened the door, squinting at the two men. They were both dressed in light summer suits, had short haircuts and wore sunglasses. One was tall, lean, in his thirties; the other was short, stocky, in his late forties.

"May we talk to you a couple of minutes, Mister Pascal?" asked the tall man.

"What about?" Clay was suspicious. "You the same guys who were here yesterday?"

"Yes, sir," said the stocky man. "Is the lady here?"

"Uhh . . . " Clay reeled as his hangover struck with a vengeance. "No, she moved . . . uhh . . . she moved out last night." He held the door open wide. "Come on in. Have a seat."

The men entered and sat on the couch, taking off their sunglasses. The short man was sweating profusely and stood up to take off his jacket. The other man sat stoically, seemingly impervious to the humidity.

"You'll have to excuse me, fellas, but I sort of tied one on last night." Clay held his head as his eyes radiated with pain. "Uhh . . . can I get you guys a drink?"

Both shook their heads.

"What time is it? Is it late enough for a cocktail?" Clay chuckled and walked to the kitchen.

"It's twelve thirty-five," said the shorter man.

Clay poured himself two shots of vodka over ice and drank it down. The hotness gliding down into his empty stomach felt good, even though he had a hunch that the price would come due later in life. He poured another drink and joined the two men, examining their faces, finding the shorter man attractive—and familiar. He was smiling. The taller man appeared cold and unfriendly. And then Clay recognized the short man as being the guy he'd had sex with at the arcade the day before.

The stocky man seemed to realize Clay's recognition and grinned widely. Clay, embarrassed and confused, turned his attention to the tall man.

"So who are you?" asked Clay, the alcohol calming him somewhat.

The tall man gestured toward the stocky man. "This is T.J. and I'm Skip.

"Ahhh . . . no," said Clay, fighting back a yawn. "I meant what agency are you with?"

"We'd rather not say until you agree to help us out," said Skip coolly.

Clay shook his head, forlorned. "Say what?"

"We work for the federal government, Mister Pascal," said T.J.

"Am I in some sort of trouble?" Clay was uncomfortable with the stocky man's grin.

"No, not in the least," said T.J. The grin faded away. "By the way, I *am* who you think I am."

Clay blushed and glanced at the tall man.

"We've been watching you, Clay . . . . Know quite a bit about you," T.J. continued. "I was a subcontractor at the job site you worked at. It was a cover for spying on you. I followed you to the bookstore . . . "

"Jesus Christ," protested Clay, glancing uneasily around the room. He looked at Skip, whose expression was the same as before. He wondered if he were still dreaming.

T.J. smiled, nodded at his partner. "He knows . . . . Look Clay, we don't have much time. You were born on June second in forty-seven near Weatherford, Texas. You were the fourth of five children and your parents are both deceased. You have no contact with your brothers and sisters, all of whom live in the Dallas area. You have a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas. Married twice and divorced both times. No children. You're a decorated Navy Seal with eighteen months in Nam. Two purple hearts . . . "

Clay felt defenseless, naked.

" . . . Black belt, sharp shooter . . . not averse to man-to-man sex, as we now know."

Humiliated, Clay was profoundly embarrassed, inducing him to gulp down the rest of the vodka. He tensed, suppressing an urge to punch T.J.

"Hey, the sex angle gives you the brass ring," T.J. went on. "That's why we're here. You see, you're the perfect

choice for a one-time-only project that could make you rich."

Clay squinted, wondering if he'd heard correctly.

The stocky man seemed encouraged at Clay's change in expression. "We can't talk money to you, but we can promise you that your financial problems will be a thing of the past." He glanced at his partner and continued. "You filed for bankruptcy nine years ago. Then, you were taken to the cleaners by an old navy buddy on a . . . pickled egg franchise last year . . . "

Clay's nervous chuckle brought a grin to T.J.'s face, but Skip remained stoic.

"Did I pique your interest?" prodded T.J.

Leaning back in the chair, Clay crossed his legs, finally nodding.

"The assignment will take anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of months. We can brief you over the next seventy-two hours, then ship you out."

"What risks are we talking about?" asked Clay, suddenly remembering how T.J. had sucked his cock. He crossed his legs tighter as his penis surged. For the first time, he became aware of the stocky man's features. He was much better looking in good light. His eyes were hazel and his lips were full and sensuous. He was partially bald with a round, cherubic face.

Skip cleared his throat. "Minimal," he said in a friendlier manner. "Of course, there are risks, but not anywhere near those you had in Nam. You don't have to kill anybody. All you have to do is play cat and mouse."

Clay was suspicious. "Then why the big bucks?"

"Because not just anybody can play this level of cat and mouse. You'll be going up against the best the enemy has," answered Skip.

Unconvinced, Clay studied the tall man's expression, finally turning to T.J., who was looking at Clay with anticipation. "Men who aren't . . . " He smirked. " . . . averse to man-to-man sex usually get kicked *out* of the service, not invited *in*."

"Although we're impressed with your navy skills, we aren't interested in that particular talent . . . . We're mostly interested in that awesome dick of yours—that and your looks," blurted T.J.

Skip's lips tightened, as if he were trying to hide a look of revulsion.

"If you want to check out our offer, we'll explain everything to you."

Clay sighed heavily and recrossed his legs as his cock began to throb. "Well, this all sounds very interesting, but it all hinges on the money . . . and the location . . . "

T.J. prepared to respond, but Skip interrupted him with a raised hand. "Why don't you go clean up and we'll take a little drive downtown."

" . . . And what agency I'll be working for," added Clay.

"You'll find out downtown," said Skip impatiently, standing and looking out the window.

Clay stood, his cock pushing through the folds of the robe. He smiled as T.J. stared at it. Clay gestured with his head toward the stairway. T.J. shook his head, nodding toward Skip, who was now biting his nails absently.

After shaving and brushing his teeth, Clay got into the shower. As he contemplated what to do with his still-raging erection, he heard his front door open and shut, followed by footfalls on the stairway. Hoping that T.J. had changed his mind, Clay remained motionless and listened to rapid movements outside the bathroom. It sounded like someone struggling to get his clothes off in a hurry. The bathroom door opened and the shower curtain parted, exposing a nude T.J.

"Change of heart?" asked Clay, shaking his head in amazement.

"Daddy Long Legs went to eat lunch. He'll pick us up in thirty minutes."

Clay opened the curtain wider, inviting T.J. inside the tub. T.J. took the soap and lathered Clay's chest, abdomen and groin. His hands trembling, he slowly washed Clay's neck, underarms, back, buttocks, cock, balls and ass. Directing the shower head, he rinsed Clay's body, then knelt, swallowing the aching cock down his throat.

Clay gasped as he realized that T.J. had consumed his entire length and was licking his testicles. Abruptly, he felt a powerful churning in his groin and stood on his toes, holding on to T.J.'s head. He snorted like an animal inflamed by estrus and sent his juices into T.J.'s gullet. Relishing the feeling of ecstasy, he lazily watched T.J. masturbate.

Shouting into Clay's crotch, T.J. shot his load, his semen exploding against the water spray, like salmon swimming upstream in white water.

A glob landed on Clay's arm, causing him to wonder what it would taste like. Unable to decipher whether he was revolted or turned on—or both—he allowed the spray to carry the glob away.

T.J.'s eyes opened, locking on Clay's. The sparkle in them assured Clay that consuming semen had an ethereal effect.

Clay sat in a conference room in the federal building in downtown Houston. It was a depressing room with no windows, dim lighting and little air movement. The walls were paneled with dark wood, matching the conference table. The carpeting was brown and the few paintings on the wall were predominantly in earth tones. A screen was pulled down in front of a blackboard. Two older men sat at Clay's right, a slide projector in front of them; T.J. and Skip sat on his left. One of the older men was short and slight, with a thin moustache. Clay guessed that he was near sixty. The other man was a little younger and very heavy, with bushy white hair.

The slight man spoke rapidly, without emotion. "Any contract we enter into will be verbal. Your money will be paid in full and placed in a Swiss bank account the day before you ship out. For our protection, we'll arrange for a life insurance policy on you with this agency as the beneficiary." He swept the room with his eyes and continued. "That out of the way, we're prepared to pay you two hundred thousand tax-free for the mission."

Clay gulped.

"It you agree to that amount, we'll proceed," the man continued. "But bear in mind that you can't back out once

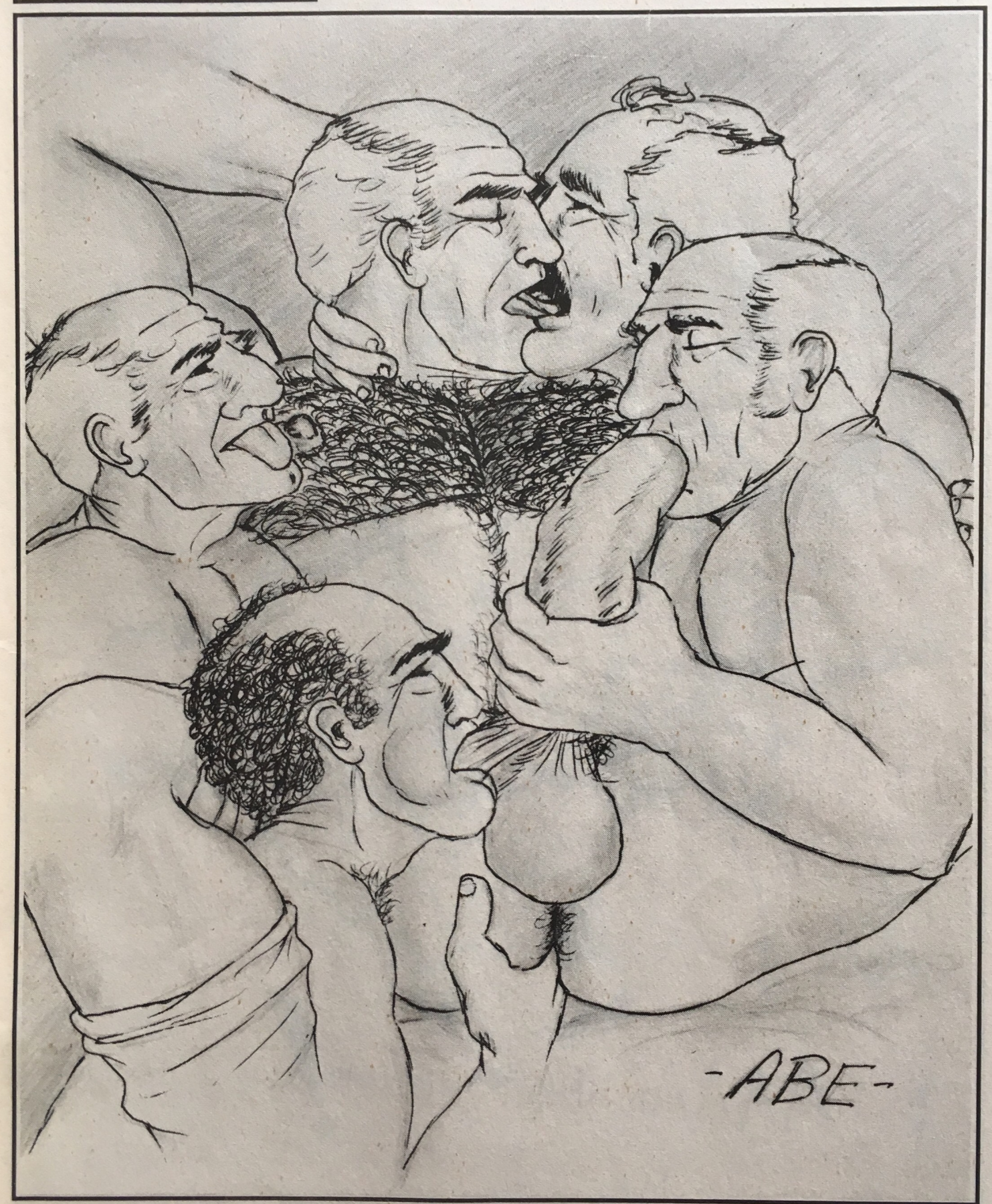
[Continued on page 16]

ABE UNLEASHED!

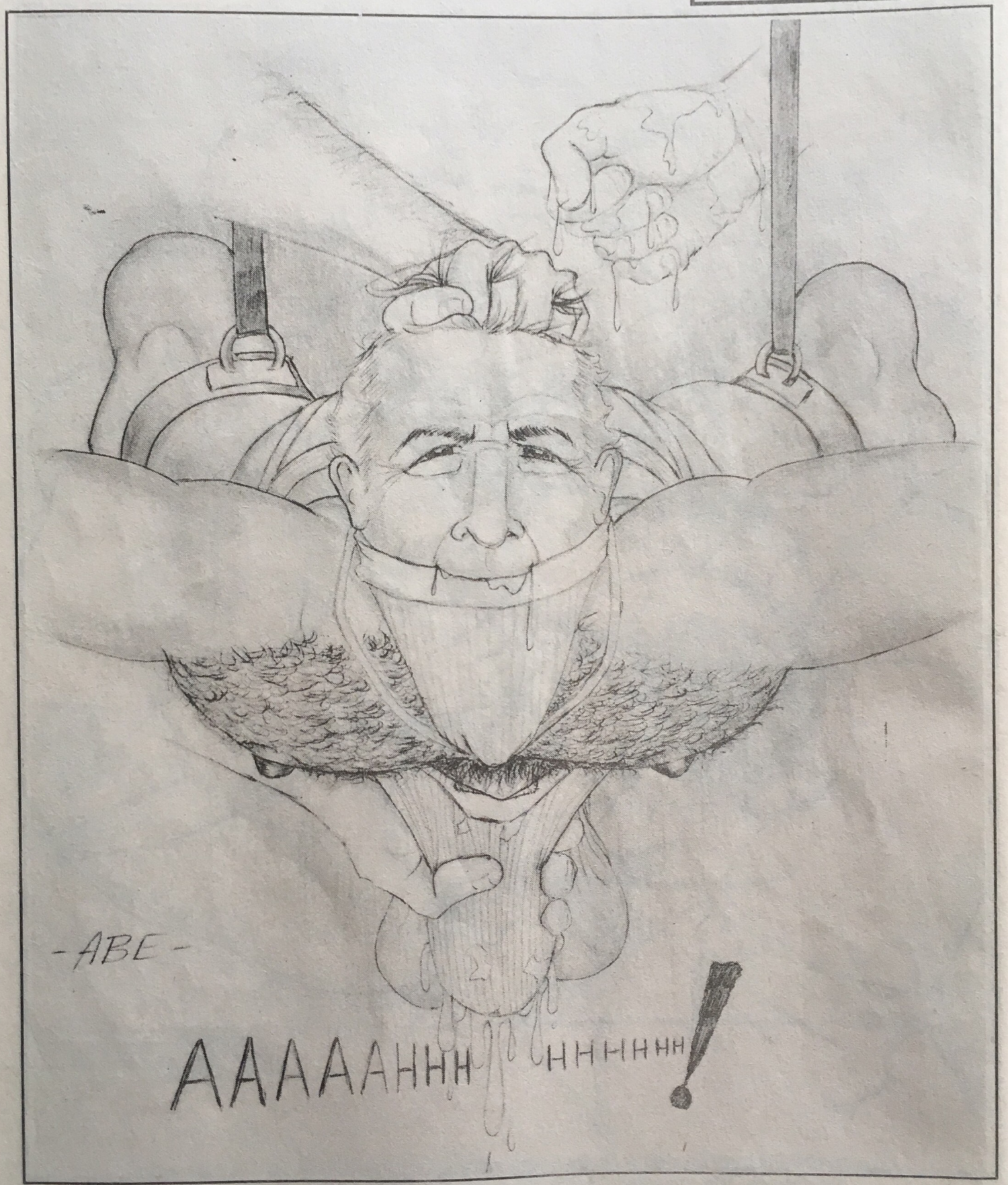
LUCKY

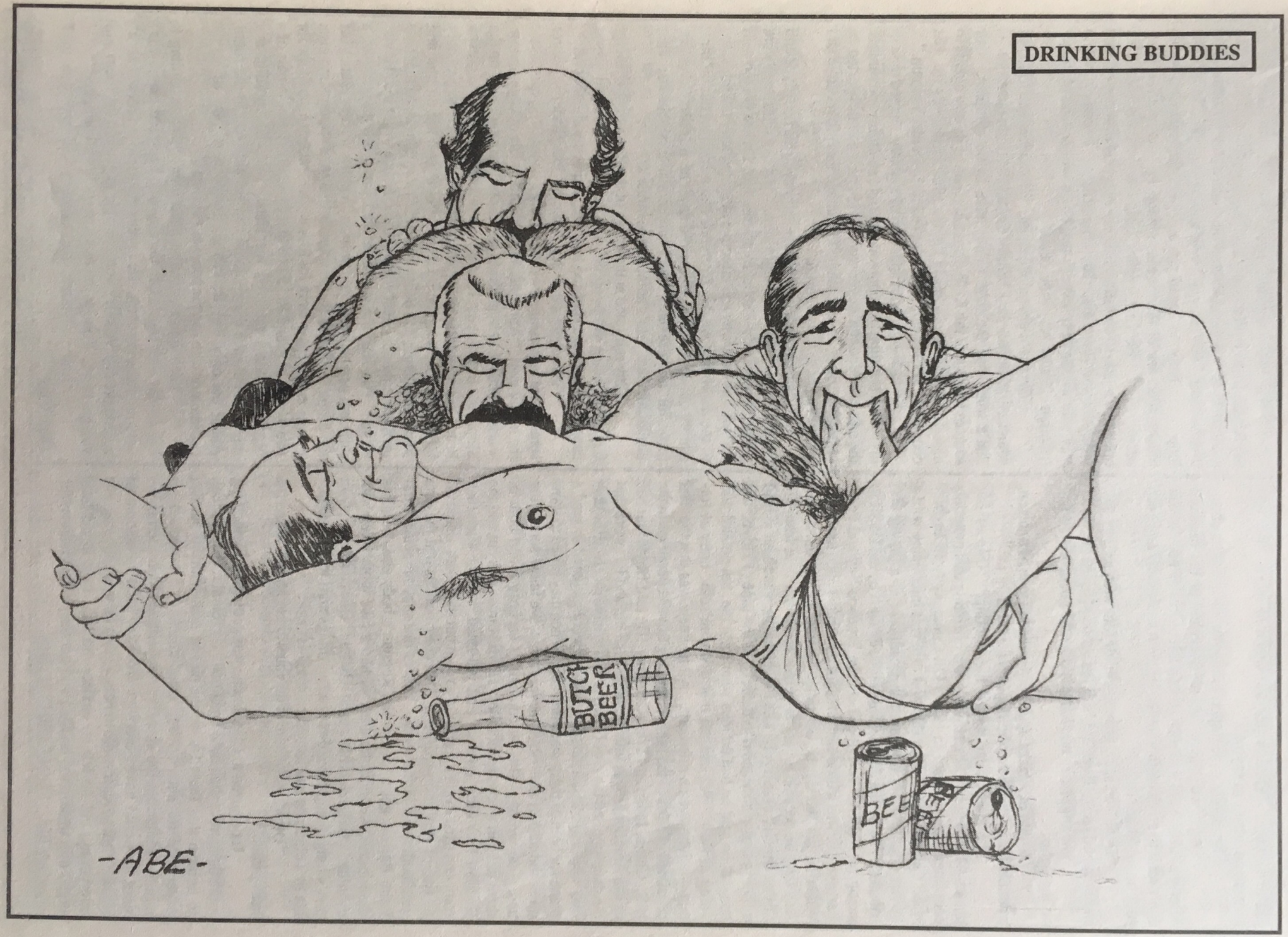
Previously living among the rugged men of Montana, ABE has recently relocated to Washington, DC, and says the transition has been a bitch. ABE is 5'-5", husky, muscular and masculine.

FAMILY REUNION



DADDY TRAINING




DRINKING BUDDIES
BUTCH BEER
BEE
-ABE-

you're in place. There's just too much at stake. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

Clay nodded, the import of the statement chilling him.

"Okay, we'll give you an overview of the mission. After you hear what's involved, you tell us yes or no. If you don't want to go through with the job, you walk away and keep your mouth shut. Deal?"

"Deal," he said, glancing at all four men as they solemnly stared back. Even T.J.'s expression appeared grave.

The slight man nodded at Skip, who got up and turned off the lights.

A map of Alaska appeared on the left side of a screen, a detailed map of the Arctic Slope on the other.

The slight man started the briefing. "One of our agents—he went by Dick Hovis—was operating as a materials coordinator on contract to Harris Oil Company from Brownstone Engineering here in Houston. He was interfacing with a Soviet double agent operating in Deadhorse as a piping distributor. The Soviet double was primarily used by the USSR to snoop on NORAD activities between Prudhoe Bay and Point Barrow. He was a little fish who got mistreated once too often. When he got fed up, he contacted us and we recruited him. Anyway, he became a very effective source for data from the Soviet Union . One day he told Hovis that he was about to land a 'hot potato' and wanted to defect. At the time of Hovis' last contact, he said he had no idea what form the 'hot potato' was going to be in. We assume that it was in some unusual format—maybe even a microdot. All he knew was that the data consisted of a list of the highest ranking Soviet operatives in the U.S., China, Japan and West Germany. He told Hovis that one of the Americans was unbelievably high up, and he swore that the data supplied the proof. Hovis was to have received the data two weeks ago last Thursday, and we were prepared to send a plane for both of them that same day. When they failed to show up at the airport and Hovis never called, we knew something had gone wrong. The oil company's security found both of them dead in a remote module. Hovis' throat was cut and the Russian had been tortured and poisoned. Right after that, someone tried to get into Hovis's room but they were scared off by two of Hovis' co-workers. That convinces us that the data was hidden inside the room. One of our subcontractors from Point Barrow got a look at the Russian's body and, from his description, we think he must've had a fake tooth filled with cyanide. The Soviets have used it before. One positions it with one's tongue and bites down when things start to get rough." He lit a cigarette and leaned back in his chair.

"Do we end it here or do you want to go on?" asked the heavy man.

It occurred to Clay that he was getting into something more dangerous than he'd imagined. He found it very difficult to believe that the CIA would pick a man with his limited experience for such an important mission. He opened his mouth to interrupt the speaker, but hesitated, considering the risks he would have otherwise taken for such an amount of money. It was reasonable to believe that he was not being told everything, but he felt no anxiety--no little man in his head urged him to stop the briefing and get back to his uneventful, mundane life. "Shoot," said Clay softly.

The heavy man took over. "No one with Harris Oil or the Alaska State Police know anything about this. The Alaska authorities approached us about the murder, but we denied any involvement. We just can't risk getting anyone else into the loop . . . . Now, to install you as Hovis' replacement, we've blackmailed one of their senior managers—the one you'll report to . . . . He's into young girls—*very* young girls. An operative inside Brownstone Engineering knows about you and will brief you about materials management. If you choose to stay with us, the next seventy-two hours will consist of indoctrination . . . with very little sleep."

The slight man spoke again. "We understand from our sources that the Russians believe the data's still in the room. If that's true, then the data would have to be compact. Our sources tell us that the KGB dispatched one of its best agents to look for it, and he obviously knows what format it's in. His code name is Cheetah, but his real name is Dmitri Volodin."

A blow-up photo appeared of a stocky, rugged man in his fifties, standing in a doorway in bright sunlight, oblivious to the camera. Volodin's eyes were vivid green and he sported an impressive bulge in his crotch. The image was provocative and brought a stir to Clay's groin.

"Unfortunately, this only shows you his body type and eye color," continued the slight man. "His facial features were modified surgically—about four years ago. He just got too well known and way, way too effective at killing and making asses of the entire free world. Everyone had a contract out on him, simply out of revenge. In the old days, he was used to entice powerful homosexuals into compromising situations, then blackmail them. He's homosexual himself."

Clay squirmed at the image of the Russian. He briefly fantasized being swept up into the Russian's arms and kissed deeply. The image shocked him and he quickly shook it off.

"We understand that Volodin established a cover somewhere in Washington state during the past two years," said the heavy man. "And since there're thousands of construction workers and oil field professionals from Washington up on the Slope, it's like looking for a needle in a haystack. If he grew a beard and moustache—a good probability— then he probably looks like half the men up there. Put a hard hat on him and some sunglasses, and he's invisible. We're convinced that he's up there right now, just waiting for a chance to get into Hovis' room. You see, the rooms in that camp are assigned to a different person every four weeks. When a worker rotates off the Slope for R and R, his room is assigned to someone else. People in that camp work for four weeks and leave the Slope for two weeks of R and R. Since that particular room is part of a block of rooms reserved for Harris material coordinators, there's no chance that Volodin can get assigned to the room. About the only way he can get inside is to play up to the coordinator who has the room at the time . . . "

The slight man interrupted him. "And according to our source with Harris Oil, the guy who has the room now is a very religious introvert. He invites no one to the room. So it's a good bet that Volodin won't be able to get into the room until you get there. You get the room next. It's all arranged."

"And you think that Volodin will approach me?" asked Clay.

Another photo was shown on the screen, causing Clay to shudder. It looked like a photo of himself, cut out and pasted against an exotic backdrop. The photo was taken in the Middle East somewhere. Clay Pascal's "twin" sat atop a camel, smiling down at someone below.

Another shot appeared, featuring the same man, serenely looking out to sea from a pier as Volodin stood next to him, affectionately smiling at the smaller man.

"This is Volodin's deceased lover," said the slight man. "Notice his resemblance to you. We hope that the resemblance will lure Volodin to you." He nodded to Skip, who turned on the lights. "Maybe the similarity will make him get sloppy. The object is to flush him out, then tease him and drive him nuts. Then you set him up by inviting him to the room."

"And then what?" asked Clay.

"Allow him to find the data, then signal us after he leaves with it," said the heavy man. "We'll close in at the airport and the coast."

"What's to keep him from killing me?" Clay frowned. "Will someone be there to protect me?"

The heavy man shook his head. "You'll be alone in Harris' lease area. We'll have a couple of men at Deadhorse on standby, though. But why would he kill you if he didn't have to? Why should he increase the risk of getting trapped? Besides, if you do your job right, he'll think you're innocent. You won't even be armed. That's the first thing he'll notice." The heavy man stared at him impatiently, looking at his watch. "After that, you'll be placed on the next flight to Anchorage and then on to Houston, where you'll be two-hundred-thousand dollars richer."

Clay scanned all of them thoughtfully. "You guys are CIA then."

No one answered.

"Whatever," mumbled Clay.

"Well?" asked the slight man.

Clay rubbed his eyes and regarded T.J.'s anxious look. "Okay," he said finally.

Both older men rose simultaneously, obviously relieved. The heavy man pointed at T.J. "T.J. will indoctrinate you on the sex angle." He nodded to Skip. "Skip will fill you in on the Swiss bank account and handle any of your loose ends, like paying your bills, rent, et cetera, just in case your assignment is extended."

Clay glanced at Skip, who looked back in amused contempt.

"After that," continued the heavy man, "you'll be briefed on the latest buzz words on materials management by one of our operatives at Brownstone. Hovis said that none of them knew a fucking thing about materials anyway. You might even improve things up there."

Both older men shook Clay's hand and walked out of the room, followed by Skip. Alone with T.J., Clay sat on the table and crossed his arms.

"You're mine for twenty-four hours," said T.J., a hint of lechery in his voice.

"What is the sex angle?" asked Clay.

T.J. threw his suit coat over his shoulder and headed for the door. He motioned for Clay to follow. "Come on and I'll show you."

Back inside his apartment, Clay sat opposite T.J. at the dinner table. Empty cartons of Chinese food and beer bottles stood between them. The prospect of what lay ahead brought a tingling heaviness to Clay's cock. He squirmed uncomfortably, amazed that anyone could have that effect over him. T.J. was more concerned with eating the food, explaining to Clay that he was an Oriental gourmet. It had been his idea to save time by getting carry-out food from his favorite Hunan restaurant.

T.J. inspected one of the cartons, disappointed that it was empty. "God, I love Oriental food, especially spicy stuff. Did I tell you that I eat Oriental food every night?"

"No." Clay was anxious to stuff his cock down T.J.'s throat again.

"Yeah. I'll have Indian food one night, then Indonesian the next, then Mandarin, then Thai, then Szechwan, Japanese, Hunan, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean—I love all of them."

"Weird. You mean you eat out every night?"

"When I travel," answered T.J., looking at Clay as if he were beginning to think of sex again. "When I'm in town, I sometimes eat out, but mostly I get out the old wok and cook my own food. There're some great Oriental markets out on the west side."

"So how long you been with the CIA?" asked Clay bluntly.

T.J. smiled at him. "Who says I'm with the CIA?" he said playfully.

"What's it like?" Clay pulled at his trousers, trying to make room for his erection.

"I'm supposed to be indoctrinating you, not answering your questions." T.J. said it gently.

"Indulge me." Clay was sincere. "I'd like to know something about you."

"Why?" T.J. burped involuntarily. "Excuse me . . . . Why do you want to know me? Hell, you'll never see me again after this."

Clay was perplexed. "Oh?" He regretted exposing any vulnerability. "You sound like I might not be coming back."

"No, no . . . no, I didn't mean to imply that." T.J. chuckled, reaching across the table to pat Clay's hand. "I meant that I'm headed for a long assignment in Europe."

Clay withdrew his hand.

T.J. leaned back, crossing his arms, shrugging. "It's just that I don't socialize with other operatives. It's department policy at my level."

"I won't be an operative after this mission is over." Clay's voice was more reserved.

T.J. shook his head, grinning. "Don't bet on it. If you pull this off, they'll recruit you and you'll become a star."

Clay now felt detached, in control.

"Well," said T.J., rising. "Shall we proceed with the sex angle?"

Clay sensed that his erection had fizzled, but shud-

[Continued on page 20]

IRONWORKER

photos by P.H. COLLEY

IRONWORKER is a 60ish ex hard chrome plater and meatpacker from Los Angeles. He's single and likes to play the field.

dered as it showed signs of returning.

T.J. walked to the couch and sat down, patting the space next to him. "Sit down."

Clay joined him, leaning back, inviting a grope.

"Part one is verbal." T.J. grinned. "Part two is action."

"Let's go to part two and skip the verbal," teased Clay.

T.J. ignored him.

"Okay . . . Cheetah—or Volodin, whatever—is one of the most dangerous KGB agents I've ever heard of. He wasn't that way in the beginning, though. Now, we don't know how his blond lover died, but we guess that the lover's death marked the turning point for Volodin. He went on this terror campaign in East Germany, wiping out Western agents with impunity. Our security was like Swiss cheese then and here's this fucking assassin who's invisible. So the big boys at Langley decided that . . . "

"Ah hah!" Clay interrupted. "Langley, Virginia is CIA headquarters. You *are* CIA."

T.J. shook his head, rolling his eyes up. "Four years ago they decided to find a double for the deceased lover and see if that would work to disarm him. Well, they went to all the trouble to find four or five candidates, but the idea got shelved after Cheetah dropped out of action." T.J. took off his shoes and pulled his feet up under him. "Anyway, when they heard that Cheetah was picked to find the data, Jackson . . . he's the fat guy that you met in the conference room . . . he reminded everyone of four years ago. So out went teams to check out the four or five guys."

Clay grinned and pointed at himself.

"You got it, dude, you were one of the finalists and Skip and I were assigned to check you out."

"And I won out," said Clay proudly. "Well, fuck me to tears."

"Later." T.J. groped Clay, then leaned back, his expression serious once again.

"Why did I win?" asked Clay, pressing his hardening cock down.

"I don't know. Skip and I are only told what we need to hear. They picked you after I told them about what happened in the video arcade. Ideally, they wanted someone who was gay, not 'trade' like you. Frankly, I don't know why they chose you."

The smile on Clay's face faded slowly as he grasped what was said.

T.J. continued. "Which brings us to this lecture . . . " He chose his words carefully. "If you think you're going to lure this guy into a web with just a big dick, you're dangerously mistaken. He'll just stay hidden until you go on R and R, then try to befriend the next tenant—or pull out all the stops and try to break in."

Clay listened carefully.

"Innocence is the key here, Clay. You have to come across as being a homosexual—not a screaming queen or one of these stereotypes who undress everyone with their eyes. No. You have to project yourself as a masculine, unaffected, *privately homosexual* man, who just happens to've been transferred to the Arctic Slope. You have to come across as someone who hates the place, yet endures it and keeps to himself. But . . . . But you have to send out that very discreet signal, be it a minute glance, or an inflection in your voice, or *something*."

Clay shook his head. "Wouldn't he expect something like this?"

"Maybe, I don't know. Nobody knows." T.J. leaned back and placed his feet in Clay's lap. "So what does Volodin know? It's understood on both sides that neither the KGB nor the CIA can just pick their spots up there. It's no secret that neither Harris Oil nor the Alaska authorities are that fond of the CIA. You can imagine what goes on near a border with the USSR. Does Volodin know that we know as much as we do? I rather doubt it."

Clay thought out loud. "This clone of his lover shows up and just happens to get assigned the same room as Hovis." He sighed. "Uh . . . *slightly* suspicious, T.J."

"Perhaps." T.J. shrugged. "You've got three major objectives here, Clay. First, you have to seduce him and convince him that you're wild about him. Second, you have to lure him to the room and get him to locate the data under your nose. Third, you have to convince him that you didn't see him take it—that you're blinded by love, or oblivious, or stupid . . . whatever."

Clay stared thoughtfully at the opposite wall. Using objective reasoning, he knew that the plan was insipid at best. His instincts told him something else entirely, however. When they had flashed Cheetah's photo on the screen, Clay had peered into those ethereal green eyes, down to the man's soul, or so it seemed. He saw himself in the image of the deceased lover. He had to meet the man. And that reason, however abstract, combined with that of the money and the challenge, was enough.

"You have a hurdle to get over tonight. You're not ready to go up there yet. You're not ready to meet Cheetah."

Clay slowly turned to face him, wondering what was next.

"You've never sucked a cock, have you?"

Clay flinched. He fought back the urge to swallow, afraid it would give him away. He shook his head.

"That one nuance that tells him it's okay to come in from the cold . . . . It's not in your repertory yet."

"I don't know what you mean," Clay lied.

T.J. studied him at length. "You're a stallion, Clay. You reek with defiance. You've got *yang* out the kazoo, but no *yin*. Oh, you have yin all right, but you suppress the hell out of it."

Clay's eyes finally registered understanding and he smiled nervously. "You want me to suck your dick, right?"

T.J. nodded, groping himself, rubbing Clay's crotch with one foot. "Trust me, Clay. It won't go against your grain. If I thought it would, I would've argued more strongly against you. Besides, you have to clear the sex factor before you can go to indoctrination step number two."

A feeling of nausea crept into Clay's stomach. "How about letting me have a shot of Scotch first?"

T.J. shook his head. "No crutches."

Clay shook his head forlornly. "It was bound to hap-

pen sooner or later, I guess." He slowly unzipped T.J.'s trousers. "I guess I was saving it for someone." He pulled out T.J.'s cock and watched as it grew in his hand. Gently pushing T.J.'s feet out of his lap, he rose and bent over the fully erect cock.

He allowed the penis inside his mouth and waited for a reaction. It wasn't traumatic like he'd imagined it would be. The thought came to him that perhaps he was looking at the experience clinically. Perhaps he'd rationalized the act as a test run.

T.J. groaned and bled a rivulet of pre-cum into Clay's mouth. "Holy shit, Clay. You're blowing my fucking mind! I estimated at least two hours talking you into this!"

The taste of the pre-cum confused him. He pulled up from T.J.'s cock and watched another tear roll from the slit. He felt his face flush and knew that his own cock was fully erect. Clay slowly looked into the hazel eyes for an answer, witnessing an expression of . . .

Longing?

Whatever it was, he never expected to see it, and it shook him.

T.J. rose and gently kissed him, pulling back, searching his eyes, kissing him again.

Clay unbuttoned his indoctrinator's shirt, as well as his own. He pressed his chest against T.J.'s and hungrily kissed him, finally allowing his tongue to glide down to T.J.'s hairy chest. He lightly bit the reddened, erect nipples and returned to the cock, now smeared with pre-cum. Knowing that he'd already passed the test, he mumbled, "Yin," and swallowed T.J.'s cock, struggling not to gag. He came up for a breath and descended again, willing the tension out of his throat. Again he came up and took a deeper breath, then buried his face in T.J.'s crotch.

"I was straight too, once," whispered T.J. "and I was swept away . . . transformed . . . like you'll be."

He felt his body move to the bottom as T.J. maneuvered him into a sixty-nine position. He felt his cock spring from its prison and become enveloped by a familiar mouth.

Cocksucker . . . . Yin . . . . Siren . . . . I'm off to seduce the most dangerous man in the universe.

FOUR

Seventy-two Hours Later

During the exhausting four-stop flight from Houston to Prudhoe Bay, Clay found himself retrieving boyhood memories. He remembered when he was three and his brother was two. Somehow, his little brother had bitten him on his little penis and the whole family panicked as they attempted to stop the bleeding. He wondered why a two-year-old would be sucking the penis of a three-year-old. He wondered why he'd even allowed it. And suddenly, it seemed conceivable that a person's sexual orientation could in fact be formulated at that age. His brother was now living in San Antonio, married with four kids. *Was he gay? Does he sneak around and suck cock in men's rooms, or does he just bury it deep within his psyche like I did?* He laughed. *Did I force him to suck my pee pee, and was biting my dick his way of fighting back?*

He remembered the first time he saw his father's cock. The family still lived on the farm in Weatherford; he was only four. Suffering from diarrhea, he had gone for the third time to the outhouse in back. The sun was just coming up on the horizon. Hearing the back screen door open, he peered through a hole, watching with great interest as his dad urinated through a piss-hard cock. After that, the boy watched for every opportunity to see his father naked. Unfortunately, his dad eventually caught on to his ploy and avoided him from that day on. He never touched his second son again—never had that much to say to him. Years later, the elder Pascal became terminally ill with lung cancer and called Clay in Houston. He asked Clay to forgive him, asked him to come home. By the time Clay arrived in Weatherford, his dad had died.

Looking out the window beyond the majesty of Mt. McKinley, he shuddered and fought back tears. He wasn't a crier and he wanted to keep it that way.

Taking off from Fairbanks on his journey's last leg, he became weary again. It was already after eight, but the sun was still high in the sky. He wondered if he would have trouble sleeping under the midnight sun. Finally, the airplane began its descent just beyond the Brooks Range and coasted into Prudhoe Bay Airport.

The 727 passed the airport and made a wide turn over the Arctic Ocean. He had anticipated heavy surf and was amazed to see how calm the coast line was. Further out, he could see the permanent ice cap. For miles in all directions, there were rivers, ponds and lakes—some a vibrant green, some deep blue. He speculated that the odd color was due to the fact that the deeper lakes never really thawed and the submerged ice turned the water a stunning emerald-green.

As the airplane landed, Clay scanned the series of modular structures which constituted Deadhorse. He tried to imagine how it would look in the middle of winter, in complete darkness, shrouded in ice fog. He wondered what a temperature of minus sixty degrees would feel like on bare skin.

Deplaning to the tarmac, Clay scanned the horizon, which looked flatter than West Texas. He followed his fellow passengers into the baggage claim area, which became so packed that no one could move. Minutes later, baggage began to fly through hanging strips of plastic, on to a metal rack. Unwilling to fight his way to the rack, he stayed back and waited for the crowd to clear. Just inside a double door exit from the baggage claim area stood a Harris Oil Company security officer, the man who would drive him to the construction camp over twenty miles out. The Brownstone CIA connection had assured Clay that the security guard would not search his baggage. He cringed at the thought of what would happen if his bag were searched and the forbidden liter of Scotch found. After another ten minutes, he was able to retrieve his suitcase; he made his way to the security guard, who checked off his name and directed him to the bus. After the bus was loaded with seventeen employees, the driver sped down an elevated gravel road toward the Harris camps.

Clay was fascinated by the sight of hundreds of caribou on each side of the road. In the distance, geese, swan and water fowl by the thousands were raising their young near the myriad bodies of water. Clouds of mosquitoes swarmed over

the bus. In the distance were the mountains of the Brooks Range, beyond which was an endless expanse of wilderness, loaded with grizzlies, wolves, mountain goats and more mosquitoes. He felt like he was in a foreign, exotic land, far, far away from safety.

The driver stopped at two other camps before arriving at the one to which Clay was assigned. Clay and three others got off and entered the camp, which consisted of a block-long, two-story center module with six wings, three on each side. The camp had 250 compartments and could house a maximum of 400 employees. The first wing on the left consisted of the dining area on the first level and a theatre and gym on the second floor. Just beyond the dining wing was the camp office, where the others lined up for check-in and room assignments.

Knowing that he would have to share a room until Hovis' room was available, Clay stood at the end of the line, scanning the eyes of those walking down the hall or sitting in a lounge adjacent to the office. He was searching for green eyes.

Having waited twenty minutes, he was finally checked in by a surly, older camp clerk, who never looked up. Without saying a word, the bearded, gaunt clerk dropped what looked like a metal tag on the counter and walked away. Clay looked at it and assumed that it was some unusual sort of key. He squinted at the key but couldn't make out the number.

"Uhh . . . . Excuse me."

The clerk ignored him.

"Hey!" barked Clay, causing the clerk to jump.

The older man frowned at Clay.

"I've never been here before, bud. You want to tell me how this works and where I go?" Clay's voice was tense, menacing.

The clerk blinked dumbly, then approached the counter. "Room B-one-thirty. 'B' Wing down the hall to your right. You stick the key into the slot behind the knob."

Clay smiled. "Much obliged."

The clerk watched as Clay disappeared down the hallway, carrying his suitcase.

Finding his room, he opened the locked door with the strange key. His roommate wasn't in. There were twin beds on each side of the room, along with separate mirrors, dressers and wardrobe closets. Separating the beds were a desk, chair and lamp. He noticed that there was a small television set on his roommate's dresser, but fought the urge to turn it on. Taking advantage of the privacy, he quickly unpacked the bottle of Johnny Walker Red he'd carefully wrapped in a towel.

A knock came to the door, startling him. Thinking it was someone looking for his roommate, he hesitantly opened the door. Two younger men stood in the hallway smiling at him. One was a tall, lanky man with cowboy boots and a big handlebar moustache. The other was homely-looking and heavyset, with thick glasses. Both wore heavy plaid shirts, insulated vests and jeans, the summer uniform of the Slope.

"Hey," said the taller one, "we heard you were with Brownstone." He had a Deep South accent.

"Uhh . . . uhh, yeah," stammered Clay. "Brownstone."

"Welcome to the fuckin' Slope, man," said the taller one, extending his hand. "I'm Bob Weeks and this here is Tom Gruber." He had obviously been drinking. "We were on that big Chevron job in Baton Rouge."

Clay shook Bob's hand, then Tom's. "Clay Pascal."

"What job were you on, Clay?" asked Tom with a loud, twangy Texas accent.

Both men walked into the room uninvited.

"Uh . . . I worked out of the Chicago and Tulsa offices," Clay said, remembering his instructions. "Uh . . . have a seat," said Clay, sitting on the edge of his bed.

"Hell, I didn't even know we had a fuckin' Tulsa office!" boomed Bob, sitting at the other end of the bed.

"Neither did I," piped Tom, sitting in the chair at the desk. "You don't sound like someone from Chicago."

"I'm from Texas." Clay smiled. "Can't you tell?"

"I thought so," Tom said, winking. "We don't take kindly to Yankees up here, you know."

"Well, we know your ass is probably draggin'," said Bob, "so we'll let you get some sleep. We just wanted to be your welcoming committee."

"I appreciate that," Clay said sincerely.

"You'll be working with us," announced Tom, his eyes looking glassier in better light. "Bob is the principal materials coordinator on the Beta gas project, and I'm the principal on Alpha. You'll be our backup on both jobs. When I go off the Slope, you take my job, then take over Bob's job when he goes off."

Clay nodded.

"The prime subcontractor on the Beta project is a company out of Seattle, called P-R-K," said Bob. "Sharp outfit and my counterpart is a big old gal. You'll like working with her."

"You're going to have your hands full with my job though," said Tom. "My subcontractor's out of Sacramento—outfit called Domke Enterprises. You ever worked with an outfit where everyone's a goddamn asshole?"

Clay shook his head. "Maybe half assholes."

"Well my counterpart is the ugliest motherfucker you ever did see and walks through the office like the fucking monster in "The Thing." Ever see that movie?"

Clay nodded.

"He's one piece of work, so be prepared."

Bob held up his hand. "That's later. First you work with me, 'cause I go on R and R next week. Gotta get you up to speed."

"You take over his job for two weeks while he's gone and then take over mine for two weeks while I'm gone." Tom smiled. "And Harris Oil gives us the equivalent of a plane ticket to our point of hire—Houston—and back. You can fly anywhere you want to go for R and R—not just Houston—provided it doesn't cost more than eleven hundred bucks."

Clay had not been told that. "Wow."

"They tell you the flip side of the coin?" asked Bob. "Up here, you work seven days a week, up to twelve hours a day, and you put up with more bull shit than you can imagine. They got materials all over the fuckin' place, but no one knows what's what. Ya see, Harris thought they'd save millions of bucks by buyin' their own materials instead of havin' their contractors buy them. Trouble is, everything was moved around and they didn't have an inventory control system in place. And since the contractors have to use owner-furnished

materials, it's up to us to find what they need, when they need it. We interface with the contractors' materials managers."

"I get the impression that Brownstone is out of touch with what's going on up here," offered Clay.

"You can say that again," said Tom. "Brownstone was really pissed not getting more of this pie than just furnishing people like us."

"What more could they've gotten?" asked Clay. "Brownstone is nonunion and this area is solid union."

"They lost out on furnishin' trackin' systems and engineerin'," explained Bob, standing. "Well, hell, Tom, let's let this man get some sleep."

Tom rose and ambled for the door. "You'll get the first private room that comes available. What else? Uhh . . . don't worry about the bull shit about the ban on booze. Everyone drinks up here, but don't flaunt it too much. If you want coke or grass—that's available too. We really party up here, otherwise we'd go nuts."

Bob led Tom out into the hallway. "We'll meet you in the mess hall for breakfast about six, okay? We usually get to the Cold Storage Pad—that's where the office, warehouses and lay down yards are—about six-thirty, seven."

"Six," confirmed Clay, closing the door after them. He felt a sinking feeling over the quality of his briefing by the Brownstone CIA man in Houston. He wondered if the information on Cheetah was as bad.

He sat on the edge of the bed and pulled off his shoes. Unpacking his suitcase, he stored the empty bag in the wardrobe closet.

A key came to the lock and Clay turned to see a brawny, bearded man standing in the doorway. His heart pounded as adrenaline rushed through his body.

"Hey, I got a roomie!" boomed the man, extending his hand. Clay guessed that the man was in his fifties. "Name's Carlson. I'm an inspector."

Clay shook Carlson's huge hand, staring into the big man's brown eyes. He instantly relaxed. "Clay Pascal, materials coordinator."

The man took off his jacket and hung it inside his closet. "You with Brownstone, too?" He turned on the television set, which was tuned to CNN.

"Yeah, you?" Clay was glad the camp was hooked up to cable.

The big man reached inside his closet for a bottle of Jim Beam, placing it on his dresser. "No, I'm a contract employee." He reached for ice in a chest on the floor, then made himself a drink.

As Clay looked on in amazement, Carlson undressed to his boxer shorts and lay on the bed, watching television and sipping his bourbon.

Carlson glanced at him. "I'll turn it down when you hit the sack."

"Don't worry, it won't keep me up," assured Clay, pretending to look at CNN while he drank in Carlson's beefy, powerful body out of the corner of his eye.

Clay looked at his watch and realized that it was getting late in spite of the sunlight outside. He had to be sharp and needed sleep. Undressing, he checked to see if Carlson were interested in checking him out. He wasn't.

Setting his alarm clock for five, he climbed in bed and fell asleep within ten minutes.

FIVE

The Following Morning

The alarm seemed much louder than usual and Clay quickly turned it off, wincing, glancing at Carlson's bed. To his astonishment, Carlson was lying on his back, a massive, erect cock sticking proudly out the slit in his underwear. The big man was snoring in spite of the shrill alarm. Clay turned on the alarm again, watching to see the effect on Carlson. He never flinched.

He wondered . . .

Idiot! Cocksucker . . . Yin . . .

But he couldn't keep his eyes off Carlson. A question he'd always pondered suddenly had an answer; now he knew why straight men feared having sex with other men. *They were afraid homosexuality was contagious.* Surely they'd read stories about people like Clay—men who sucked one cock and became forever addicted to semen. He imagined how ridiculous he must look, lying in bed, immobilized by the sight of a huge, sour cock, made hard by a full bladder.

He sat on the edge of the bed, gauged the depth of the bearded man's sleep. His own cock rose and swelled to shiny hardness. Quietly, he got to his feet and walked stiffly to the edge of Carlson's bed, listening carefully to the rhythm of the man's snoring. He began to stroke his penis, fueled by the absurdity and insane prurience of the act. He sensed a powerful compulsion to actually go down on the man and wondered under what conditions he would have done it, to hell with the consequences. His transformation was beginning to frighten him.

An electronic pulsing alarm went off near Carlson's head, frightening Clay back to his bed just in time to see the big man's eyes pop open. Clay managed to hide his erection as Carlson turned off the alarm under his pillow, then sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Good morning," Clay said, his voice thin with the residue of panic from the near miss.

Carlson grumbled something Clay couldn't understand, then shamelessly stood and stretched, aiming his cock at Clay.

"How come my alarm clock didn't faze you," asked Clay, his voice back to normal, "yet yours got you right up."

Carlson opened his closet and grabbed a robe, putting it on. "Beats the shit out of me." He picked up a towel and soap dish. "I've spent my whole life getting into trouble over being late. Before I finally found an alarm clock that worked, I had to have someone wake me with a wet washcloth." He pointed out the window toward a construction site several hundred yards away. "We had a big explosion over there at the gas flares a couple of months ago; I fucking slept right through it." He opened the door and disappeared.

"No kidding," said Clay, his erection returning. He stood and got into his robe. Stepping into shower shoes, he fetched his shaving kit and soap dish and went in search of a

sink.

Clay found the nearest men's rest room less than thirty feet away, but Carlson had obviously gone to another one. He took a sink between two younger men, brushing his teeth and shaving. Finding an available shower stall, he stood under the powerful spray and masturbated at the thought of sucking Carlson's cock while the man remained locked in his nightly coma.

Bob Weeks and Tom Gruber were downstairs finishing breakfast as Clay brought his tray to their table. "Sorry I'm late. I'm a fast eater."

"No hurry," assured Bob. "Hell, take your time." He looked at his watch. "We got another thirty minutes and the Cold Storage Pad's only three miles away."

"How'd you sleep?" asked Tom, grinning. "Some guys have to tape the fucking shades to keep out the sunlight."

"Won't be long and you'll wish you could see *any* sunlight," reminded Bob.

"It didn't bother me," said Clay, eating his breakfast with vigor. "Damn, this is good for free food."

"Yeah," offered Tom. "This place might have lots of drawbacks, but the free room and board really make up for it—not to mention the big bucks and free R and R plane tickets."

Bob and Tom watched Clay eat his breakfast.

"I'm gonna take you over and meet all the Harris honchos on my job," said Bob. "We got a staff meetin' and I'll introduce you around. They're a pretty decent group of guys."

Clay nodded, anxious to get started. He was petrified that someone might expose him as an impostor.

"What you gotta remember about this job, Clay, is that you're the guy who makes sure your contractor gets the materials he needs, when he needs it. That's number one. Number two, you gotta make sure Harris Oil Company's materials aren't squandered. Number three, you gotta protect your allotment of materials from assholes like Tom here and the other six thieves you're gonna meet later this morning."

"Six?"

"Yeah," said Tom. "There're nine of us from Brownstone, interfacing with the six major contractors up here. We report to three Harris Oil materials supervisors, who report to two Harris materials managers. Everyone has an alternate for when they go on R and R."

Clay chased his breakfast with a gulp of coffee. "So at any one time, there're several people off the Slope on R and R."

"But everything is staggered, so you'll get to meet everyone eventually," said Bob.

Clay finished his coffee and wiped his mouth on a napkin. "Ready?"

The other men nodded and led Clay to a window to deposit their trays.

Bob drove a Ford Bronco along the elevated road toward the Cold Storage Pad as Tom gave Clay a rundown on locations. There were two major construction sites and four major camps—two for professional/clerical and two for construction craft personnel. Gas and oil wells were located over a vast area and connected to pipelines leading to oil transfer stations and gas gathering facilities, which were undergoing major modifications. Each major contractor had office and storage facilities, as did several other subcontractors. All structures were built atop six-foot-thick pads of gravel taken from a quarry near the coast. All the pads were connected by a network of six-foot-thick gravel roads, branching off from the main or "spine" road. Virtually nothing was allowed on top of the delicate tundra except elevated pipelines. The state of Alaska and the federal government insisted that, when all the wells eventually went dry, the facilities would all be dismantled and all the gravel would be transferred back to the quarry. The object was to ensure that the land would eventually become pristine again, and everyone laughed at the idea, deeming it absurd.

The Cold Storage Pad contained several warehouses operated by Teamster warehousemen, drivers and operators; a receiving and laydown area; the office which housed the materials management team; and a series of platforms for cold storage of materials not sensitive to the extreme cold of the Arctic winter. At the opposite end of the pad were the maintenance facilities used to keep the hundreds of vehicles operating.

Clay was taken inside the materials office and introduced to all the other materials coordinators, secretaries, consultants, clerks and Teamster supervisors. He was ushered into the material supervisors' offices to meet his supervisor, followed by a quick introduction to the top man, the one the CIA had blackmailed in order to bring Clay in. The manager, a tall grey-haired man, looked at Clay with contempt. Clay shook his limp hand and followed Bob to the warehouse to meet the Teamsters.

Later, Bob and Clay drove to a construction office adjacent to one of the gas gathering facilities. Before the staff meeting convened, Bob introduced Clay to the project manager, the construction manager, the project engineer and the discipline engineers. As the meeting transpired, Clay listened intently, relieved that he fully understood the scope of the project, and since he had worked on several construction sites, he was familiar with virtually all of the materials he would have to track, protect and issue. He felt good, and with that worry out of the way, he could concentrate on finding Cheetah.

That afternoon, Clay sat in a conference room at the materials management office, studying various computer-generated material status reports. A short, thin man with balding blond hair and metal-rimmed glasses approached him. He appeared to be in his late thirties and somehow looked different from all the others.

"Hi," the man said shyly. "I didn't meet you when you first came in. I'm Frank."

Clay shook his hand. "I'm Clay Pascal."

"Have they thoroughly confused you?"

Clay chuckled. "Pretty much."

Frank nodded to a schedule on the wall. "You get my room when I go on R and R next week."

The religious introvert, thought Clay. "Oh, you're the . . . uhh . . . the one . . . "

Frank cocked his head, puzzled. "The one what?"

"The one who has the room I'm dying to get into." He chuckled nervously, reminding himself to be more careful.

"You in a double room now?"

Clay nodded, shuddering, his attention drawn to Carlson.

"They're always short of private rooms. My contract calls for a private room, but I always have to wait on one every time I come back." Frank frowned. "Invariably I get paired with some drunk, or worse, some cocaine freak."

"I was amazed at how freely the booze flows here," commented Clay, wondering what Frank's reaction would be, knowing that someone as deadly as Cheetah was probably stalking him, trying to figure out a way to get inside his room.

"Yeah, it gets pretty bad when you're trying to sleep. I can't believe the parties that go on at the camp. How can these people work twelve hours, seven days a week, then party all night?"

"I know I couldn't," said Clay.

Frank seemed to warm up to him. "I hit the sack at nine every night and get up at three."

"Three?" Clay winced.

"They have a gym over the dining area with all this neat equipment. It's open twenty-four hours, so I sometimes work out from three to four, then have breakfast and go to work early."

"Hey, I might join you." Clay had been worried about how he would stay fit. "Getting up at three might be a problem, though."

Frank chuckled. "Drop by sometime. I'm in D-two-twenty. I'll fill you in on some of the things to watch out for." He looked over his shoulder. "Some of these guys are real cutthroats and half of them are coke heads."

"Great," said Clay, anxious to have his first look at the room. He almost laughed as he imagined finding the data and heading back in victory without having to butt heads with Cheetah. "I'll come by right after dinner tonight."

"I'll be expecting you." He walked back to his office with a smile on his face.

Clay had dinner with Bob and Tom, later declining an invitation to go to a party in a craft camp. He went into his room and saw that Carlson hadn't been there. He poured himself a glass of Scotch and drank it while watching the news on television. Finishing it, he left and found Frank's room.

Frank answered Clay's knock and cheerfully invited him inside, gesturing for him to sit at the desk chair while he sat on the bed. "Leave the door open, okay?"

Clay smiled at Frank's paranoia and sat on the chair, methodically scanning the room. "Oh, it's going to be nice in here. You don't appreciate your privacy until you lose it, you know?"

"Yeah," said Frank. "Coming back from R and R is the most traumatic part of this job. You never know who you'll end up with. Last time, I had to share with an engineer who threw parties every night. Had to sleep with ear plugs."

"Inconsiderate asshole." Clay shook his head sincerely.

"So, how much did those goons Weeks and Gruber tell you?"

The tone of the question surprised Clay. "You mean Bob and Tom?" He chuckled. "Hell, I don't remember last names yet."

"Yeah, them." Frank's expression clearly indicated his contempt for the two men.

"A lot . . . uhh . . . " Clay shrugged. "They told me about the layout of the Harris Oil lease area, introduced me around, told me what was expected of me . . . mostly business stuff."

"They tell you anything about me?"

Clay wondered how someone so paranoid could function in such an environment. "No, never mentioned you."

He seemed surprised. "They give me a rough time. It's because I don't socialize with them, probably. You see, I don't drink and I'm a Christian. I used to witness for the Lord until I was told by the materials manager to stop. And he's living in the worst kind of sin imaginable. Did they tell you he's having an affair with an eighteen-year-old secretary? She's probably *sixteen* and lied to get here."

"No," said Clay, his eyes pouring over the walls behind Frank.

"Did they tell you about your contractor?"

Clay shook his head. "Nothing to speak of, but they're going to introduce me to them tomorrow. We have a meeting at their offices."

"Your counterpart is a woman," Frank said, relishing the fact that he could tell Clay first. "They tell you that?"

Clay shook his head in a lie, hoping Frank would get carried away and tell him about everyone.

"I think she's a lesbian. She's big—about two hundred fifty pounds—and she cusses like a sailor. Always fighting with Bob Weeks. Good luck."

"Looks like I'll need it," Clay said, trying to look serious.

"They tell you about Hovis?"

"Hovis?"

Frank grimaced. "They didn't tell you *anything*!" His expression darkened. "You replaced a coordinator from Houston who was murdered."

Clay feigned a look of horror.

"He was found dead with another man at 'J' Pad, down the road about six miles." He pointed northward. "The whole thing was really hushed up, so we don't have any idea why he was killed. Somebody said it was a murder-suicide pact. Hovis wasn't married and he kept to himself, so everyone said he was probably a homosexual." Frank exposed his revulsion with a momentary leer.

Clay wondered what would happen if he told Frank that probably everyone thought the same thing about him. *You creep, I could crater you with a few choice words.* Instead, Clay attempted to mimic the leer, inducing Frank to smile.

"It happened two weeks ago. What's creepy is that *this* was Hovis' room." Frank's eyes widened, as if he were telling ghost stories to children.

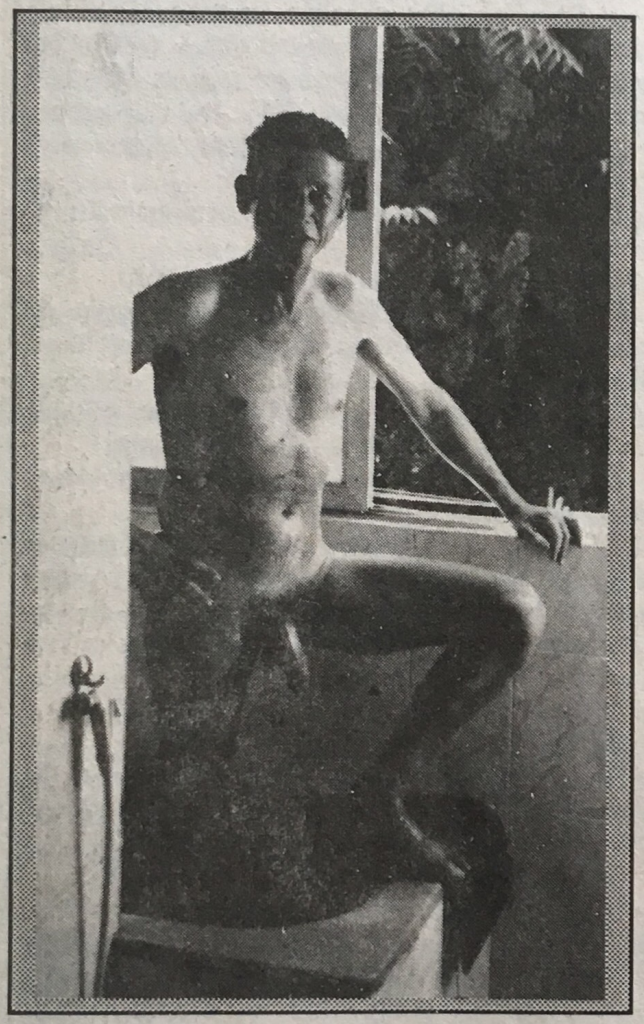
Clay voluntarily shuddered, rubbing his hands together nervously. "No sh . . . kidding," he said, catching himself.

"I just got the room last week," continued Frank. "For a whole week, the state police searched this room like crazy. Don't know what they were looking for. Then, right before I

[Continued on page 28]

INTERNATIONAL

ISRAEL



SMILEY . . . a self portrait

SMILEY is in his 40s and is very well put together. He lives in Tel Aviv and loves mature, senior men over 70.

BELGIUM

ZARDOZ 13 . . . photo by ROELAND FRANCIS

ZARDOZ 13 is one of the seemingly countless model/friends of FRANKIE BEARMANIAC and HE-BIG-MAN. As far as we know, he lives near Brussels.

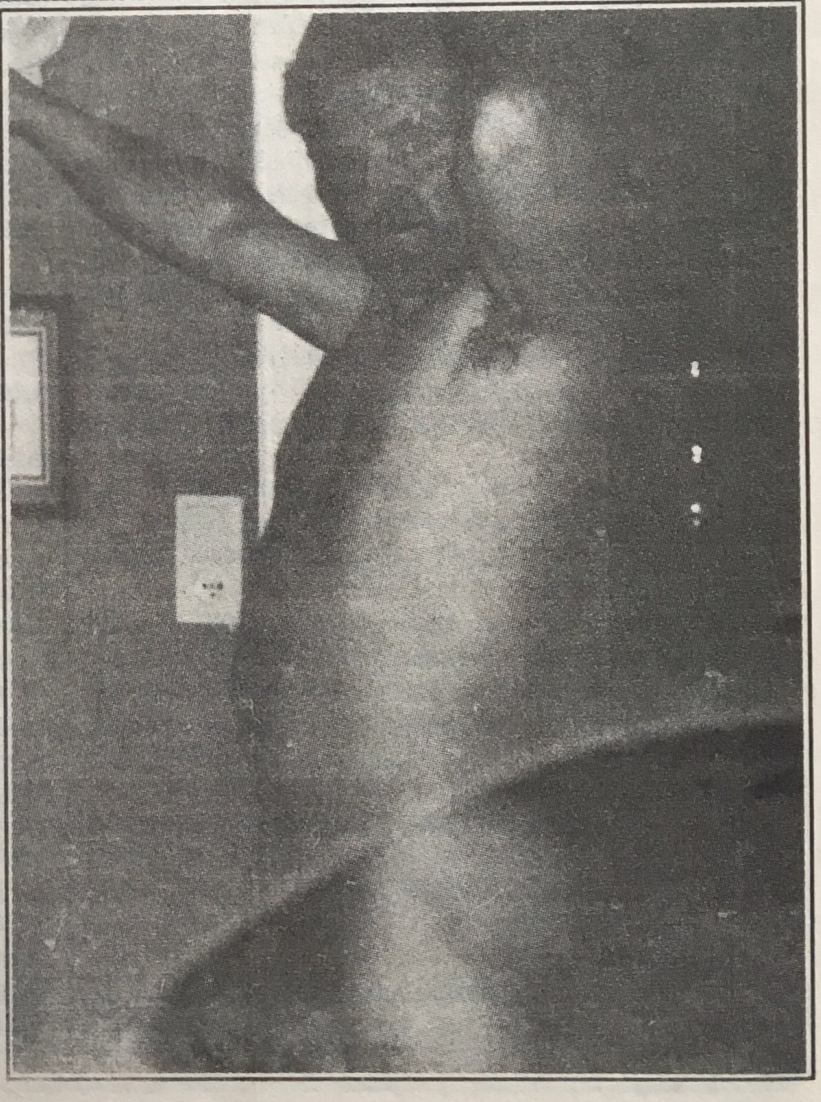
MODELS

BRAZIL

THE BOY FROM BRAZIL
. . . photo by FRANKIE BEARMANIAC

LUXEMBOURG

JACK IN LUXEMBOURG
. . . photo by HE-BIG-MAN



Both of the above models may be contacted through FRANKIE BEARMANIAC in care of CR. Please provide 45 cents in postage.

moved in, Cecil—he's one of the other coordinators across the hall—he said he saw someone trying to get in the room. Some guy with a beard. Cecil asked him what he wanted and the guy staggered away, so we figure he was just a drunk who got lost. Of course, Cecil was probably stoned, too."

"Did this Cecil recognize him?" Clay was breathless.

"He said it looked like someone who worked for one of the contractors, but I forgot which one. Personally, I think he was one of the craft from another camp looking for one of the slut's rooms." His eyes narrowed. "Have you taken a good look at what goes on in the camps with the women?"

"Did you guys tell anyone about this?"

"No," said Frank, puzzled.

"Where is this Cecil?"

"On R and R. Why?" Frank appeared suspicious.

Clay shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe it could have been important." He regarded Frank's expression and retreated quickly. "Probably not. So what about the women?"

The look of suspicion waned. "Notice that there are no older women here. They're all young and slutty. There was a fight between two young women in front of Bob Weeks' room two nights ago. They were fighting over who would sleep with him. They hire these young women from Anchorage and Fairbanks and fly them up here on a week on/week off rotation and pay them forty thousand for operating a word processor. It's disgusting. All the guys here have girl friends on the slope and wives down in the lower forty-eight." His face was getting red with mounting indignation. "I'd like to write an exposé about this place. I've never been in a more sinful place in my life. I'm just glad I'm a strong Christian."

Oh, fuck me to tears! Clay's head began to hurt.

Frank filled Clay in on all the sinful facts for an hour before he excused himself to go to the bathroom. Relieved, Clay swiftly went over the walls with his hands, feeling for bumps. He checked the mirror for dots and the corners for pins. Too soon, he heard footfalls in the hallway and sat down just before Frank walked in.

Clay yawned. "Well, I think I'll be hitting the sack, Frank. Thanks for all the information." He stood up and yawned again, almost laughing at Frank's disappointed expression.

"Come by anytime," said Frank, smiling shyly. "See you tomorrow morning at three-thirty in the gym, okay?"

"Uh . . . if I can get up, yeah," said Clay, leaving Frank's room.

Clay went to the recreation room where free soft drinks and snacks were available. He got a soft drink and glanced around at an assortment of pool tables, card tables and electronic games. The room was packed. He got the unsettling feeling that he was being watched and scanned the multitude of unfamiliar faces.

Are you there, Cheetah? Wanna play?

SIX

The Following Morning

Clay awakened to his alarm clock, which displayed three-forty-five. The sun was just below the horizon. He glanced at Carlson, who was sleeping on his left side facing the wall, wrapped in a blanket.

"Shit," whispered Clay, realizing that Carlson must have turned down the heat before going to bed.

Frustrated, Clay noisily dressed in a sweat suit and was about to leave when Carlson turned onto his back and started snoring. Clay walked to the foot of his bed and looked down at him hungrily.

Carlson's cock pressed against the blanket, luring Clay's hand. He reached down and watched as his hand trembled violently. He pulled his hand back, thinking of what he would say if Carlson suddenly awakened. "You stopped breathing for several seconds, Carlson," he whispered in practice. "Do you have sleep apnea? Man, I thought you'd died." It sounded feasible, so Clay reached down again, this time to Carlson's left foot. He pressed against it. "Carlson?" He pressed harder. "Carlson?" His heart pounding, he reached for Carlson's calf and squeezed it lightly. "Carlson, wake up."

The big man's snoring rhythm never changed, and he never stirred.

Swallowing with a dry mouth, Clay lightly touched the bulge of Carlson's cock, which was flaccid. He squeezed it gently, feeling it gradually swell in his hand. Still, Carlson's snoring remained constant.

Clay's cock ached and throbbed so much that he was afraid he would ejaculate prematurely. It was as if his hand had become an extension of his cock. When he touched Carlson's cock, he eerily felt it on his own penis. He therefore pulled his hand back and knelt at the edge of the bed, looking at the bulge from a different angle. He propped up his rumbling balls with the elastic waist band of his sweat bottoms and stroked himself, instantly taking his hand away as his groin rumbled with the threat of an ejaculation. He tried to lift up the blanket, but Carlson had rolled over the edge, tucking it under his body.

Almost frantic, Clay squeezed Carlson's cock again, more firmly, warily watching the man's face. Still, no interruption, no stirring. Clay braced himself with his hands and placed his mouth over the bulge, exhaling hot air through the blanket. He felt the cock throb against his lips.

Clay's body quaked as he felt the onset of ejaculation. He reached down and directed the flow of semen under the bed, just as it was about to arc over the blanket. As the spurting subsided, he cupped his hand over the slit and silently returned to his bed. Feeling his cock grow soft and release its final drop, he wiped himself with a facial tissue. Grabbing a handful of tissues, he crawled to Carlson's bed and wiped up as much of his mess as possible.

Clay sat on the edge of his own bed, staring at Carlson for several minutes, speculating on whether or not he would get by with it a second time. He considered that the big man might be pretending to sleep, but discounted the theory. Besides, it was much more exciting knowing that he had just seduced a man against his will, without his knowledge. He felt omnipotent in a way.

Several roads led from the camp; he chose a road which led to a distant module. A pipeline, elevated by steel supports, followed the road, and there was a sign which indicated that the module was called "C Pad" and was three miles

away. Deciding that a six mile walk would be invigorating, he struck out for C Pad.

The temperature was in the high fifties and the sun was now above the horizon. The tundra was ablaze with the colors of Arctic flora, which had only a few weeks of glory. In another few weeks, they would go back into hibernation as the blowing snow came and the temperature dipped to as low as sixty to seventy below. Clay watched a cloud-like swarm of mosquitoes as it skimmed over the tiny flowers. Ahead he saw a small group of caribou, grazing near a cluster of ponds. Further out, he saw a couple of swan with their young, swimming in a small lake, warily tracking Clay's movement.

A hundred yards from C Pad, he saw another group of caribou being stalked by two Arctic foxes. The caribou, not too concerned about the foxes, charged with lowered antlers when the foxes came too close. Clay assumed that the foxes were only being mischievous. He studied the module ahead and saw two Harris Oil pickups parked outside, indicating that the pad was probably an operating well. He counted six well heads, each enclosed in metal siding, with piping emanating from the ground to the central module.

Reaching the perimeter of the pad, he turned and headed back for the camp. The foxes had grown bored with the caribou and curiously watched Clay. They appeared unafraid and almost tame. Clay remembered being told that many of the Arctic foxes were rabid and that he should avoid coming in contact with them. He therefore watched them carefully, wondering what he would do if they attacked him. A mile further, a caribou bull approached the road as Clay walked by. He seemed disturbed and suddenly climbed up on the roadway. Afraid that the bull was going to charge, Clay began to run, laughing at the absurdity of being chased by such an innocuous-looking beast. Convinced that the caribou was young and only having fun, Clay slowed to a fast walk, finally ignoring the animal when it stopped and returned to the females.

A swarm of mosquitoes suddenly descended upon him, and he started to run again, brushing the insects off his face and head. Alarmed, he pulled his sweat shirt over his head and ran faster, concerned that he wasn't in good enough shape to run and fight mosquitos the two miles or so back to the camp. Then he heard the sound of a truck motor and glanced back to see that one of the pickups from C Pad was heading toward the camp. Clay wildly waved him down and ran to get into the passenger side.

"Somebody should have warned you about these goddamned mosquitoes," said the driver. "You don't see anyone else walking out here do you?"

Clay disgustedly brushed the crushed mosquitoes off his face, almost vomiting at the sight of blackened blood on his hands.

"That's caribou blood, not yours," said the man calmly. "You probably have only a few bites. Most of those you scraped off are males. The female is the only one that bites."

Clay turned to him for the first time. The sight of the man made him suck in air, as if someone had thrown ice water over him. He was burly with a dark beard. Dark hair flowed over the top of his shirt and from underneath his hard hat.

"I'm Burt Perkins, not a ghost."

Clay caught hold of himself. "Jesus. I'm sorry. It's just that you look like a good friend who died." Clay saw that the man's eyes were blue-green. "You work for Harris?"

"On contract. I'm not a regular employee. You?"

"Brownstone."

Burt laughed. "Goddamn, you guys are like these damned mosquitoes. You're all over the place."

"Big company."

"I reckon," said the man.

"Where're you from?"

"Seattle. Used to live in Anchorage, but I got sick of working in oil fields and moved to Seattle." He laughed bitterly. "And here I am up in the fucking oil fields again, seeing my family ten times a year."

"Bucks are good, though," Clay reminded, wondering if Burt could be Cheetah. He rubbed his crotch to see if the man noticed. He didn't.

"Yeah, the bucks are good, I guess."

Both men fell silent as the pickup pulled in front of the camp. They walked to the entrance together.

"Well," said Burt, "see you around."

"Yeah." Clay watched him head for the dining area. "I really appreciate your coming to my rescue."

Burt held up his hand and waved as he disappeared through a double door.

As Clay made his way to his room, he felt somehow altered. Never before had he harbored so much lust for other men. He couldn't wait to get in the shower so he could masturbate to the fantasy of sucking Burt's cock in the pickup.

Whore! Cocksucker . . . . Yin . . . .

"Today, you get to meet Grizzly Greta," announced Bob, grabbing his hard hat and notebook.

Clay followed Bob out of the cramped office he shared with Tom. "Grizzly Greta?"

Bob chuckled. "This bitch is something else. She's the materials manager for my contractor, Padley-Roberts-Knight, better known as 'Prick Construction.'" He walked by the warehousing manager, a massive, bearded Teamster. "Found my pipe yet?"

The manager glowered at him.

Bob chuckled and raised his hands in mock submission, backing out of the office. "Just thought I'd ask."

The big man picked up the microphone of a CB radio. "Two-twenty-two to four-eighty," he said, glancing at Clay.

"Did I introduce you to Clay Pascal, my alternate?" Bob asked. "Clay, this is Truck, the meanest motherfuckin' biker this side of hell. He's also the boss of all the Teamsters on Cold Storage."

Truck nodded at Clay, who returned the nod. Clay was amazed at how many massive, bearded men there were around him. He began to doubt his ability to find Cheetah first.

"Four-eighty," came a voice on the radio. "If it's about that pipe, Truck, we found it at 'J Pad.' I'm out here now with Greta."

"Shit," spat Bob. "The fuckin' Amazon found the goddamn pipe."

"Okay," said Truck, a grin forming on his hairy face. "Two-twenty-two out."

"Four-eighty . . ." came the voice, followed by a crackling noise.

Truck laughed heartily.

Bob turned and stormed outside to the Bronco, Clay at his heels.

Both men got into the vehicle.

"She made a fool out of me again, that cunt!" Bob shook his head, finally chuckling. He drove in the opposite direction of the camp. "J Pad is about four miles from here. Other than the Teamsters, Tom and I are about the only ones who go out there. Since the wells there have all been dismantled, we use the pad as a storage yard for pipe, valves and fittings." He slammed his hand on the steering wheel. "I've been out here ten fuckin' times, lookin' for that shit. It's about fifty feet of twenty-inch cold weather pipe—exotic as hell. Shit, I accused Tom of stealin' it."

"Does that happen? Do the other coordinators steal materials from each other?" Clay knew the answer. On a construction site, any material is fair game.

"If someone gets caught, they're kicked off the Slope on the spot," answered Bob. "But the materials are so fucked up and misallocated that a coordinator could plead ignorance and get by with it."

"Sounds like a no-win situation. If someone steals your twenty-four inch butterfly valves, you steal someone else's," offered Clay.

"Oh, Harris purchasing will buy them again, but it's your ass if the old ones show up. I heard a rumor that one contractor lost a shitload of materials and had Harris buy it again. Later, when they found all of the shit in one of their goddamned warehouses, they went out and buried it in the fuckin' tundra somewhere."

Bob turned down a narrower road and sped toward a small module and storage yard in the distance. The pad was completely surrounded by water and accessible only by the one road. There were no other modules for miles. Clay made a mental note that this would be an ideal place to come for solitude. He fantasized bringing Burt or Carlson to the pad andhaving them in the sunlight.

"This place gives me the creeps," said Bob, shuddering. "One of our coordinators was killed out here with another dude. People say that they were queer and that it was some sort of suicide pact. I guess the other man slit our coordinator's throat and poisoned himself."

Clay looked ahead at the two pickups. "Yeah, I heard something about it. Too bad." He saw what looked like two men—one burly and one short and wiry. Both were wearing hard hats. As they got closer, Clay could see that the shorter one was definitely a man, with a blond beard and glasses. He looked like he was in his twenties. Then the other individual turned around and smiled at Bob. "That's a woman?"

"That's a woman," assured Bob, trying not to smile at Greta, finally breaking out into a laugh.

Bob pulled up between the other vehicles and both men got out. Greta glanced at Clay, but continued to smile at Bob. The blond man walked off to look at a pallet of pipe fittings.

"I'm not going to gloat," said Greta, her voice high and feminine. She was nearly six feet tall and looked like she weighed near 250 pounds. Her hands were rough and large. Her boots were fairly small, but she walked and stood like a man.

"Yes, you will," said Bob, grinning. "Greta, meet Clay, my alternate."

Greta shook Clay's hand strongly. "Nice to meet you, Clay. How do you like this fucking zoo?"

"So far, so good," said Clay.

"My new alternate is due tomorrow," she said to Bob. "I can't wait to get off this goddamned Slope," said Greta, masculinely placing her hands in the back pockets of her jeans. "I'm flying to Anchorage on your flight." She laughed. "And I'm gonna sit next to you and embarrass your ass." She punched him on the shoulder.

Bob cringed, feigning pain. "Goddamn, she punches like a fuckin' heavyweight boxer."

"Did you bring a requisition for me to sign, asshole?" she asked Bob. "Where are you from, Clay?" she asked as Bob reached inside the Bronco for a requisition pad.

"Houston. You?"

"Tacoma. I've been with Prick for twenty years."

"No kidding," said Clay, instantly warming up to her.

She watched as Bob filled out the requisition. "I started out as a clerk typist and got transferred to warehouse clerk a couple of years later. I used to really piss them off, sneaking onto the forklifts and teaching myself to operate all the equipment. Finally, I got into the Teamsters and took some courses on inventory tracking and procurement systems. Eventually they started taking me seriously."

"Sign this, Grizzly," said Bob, handing her the requisition. "And don't snoop out here again, understand?"

She winked at Clay. "Understood, sir."

"Hey, Don!" yelled Bob at the blond Teamster. "We need a truck and forklift!"

"I got a truck and forklift on the way," said Greta sheepishly, knowing that she was supposed to get permission first.

"I might have known." Bob shook his head and got into the Bronco.

Clay waved at Greta and got in also.

"Nice to meet you, Clay," said Greta, proud of herself.

Bob pulled away from the pad and sped toward the Cold Storage Pad, his mood becoming irritable. "That's what you have to watch out for. She loves to make fools of the guys."

"That doesn't bother me," said Clay, drawing Bob's ire. "If she's that good, then the material is easier to keep track of."

"I'll give you two weeks and you'll hate her," Bob predicted.

"I doubt it," said Clay, watching the thousands of nursing birds frolic with their young.

He went to bed at nine, exhausted over having to follow peripatetic Bob Weeks from pad to pad, constantly

looking for lost materials. Just as Clay was about to fall asleep, Carlson carefully entered the room, weaving and obviously drunk. Feigning sleep, Clay watched the big man change into his robe, then fumble for his shower shoes and look all over for his soap dish. Finally finding it, he pulled a towel off a rack and staggered out the door.

Clay was determined not to postpone the seduction any longer and crawled under the desk to turn up the heat. Cautioning himself not to be over-confident, he lay in expectant agony, fondling himself. He was obsessed with having Carlson.

Twenty minutes later, Carlson quietly entered the room again, hanging up the towel and putting away the soap dish. Turning on the television set, he placed his pillow against the wall and sat watching CNN.

Shit! Frustrated, Clay watched through partially closed eyelids as Carlson sat, absently playing with his soft cock. After several minutes, the big man showed no signs of falling asleep, so Clay allowed himself to doze off, knowing that his lust would awaken him at intervals until the time was right.

At ten minutes after two, the time became right. The sky was much darker and Carlson was snoring loudly, leaning against the wall, his legs hanging over the side of the bed. Clay got up and turned off the television, then stood at the foot of the bed. He looked down at the big man's exposed, semi-erect cock and felt a raging hunger for it.

His teeth clattering from fright, Clay knelt on the floor between the two massive legs and touched the swaying cock. He squeezed it, warily looking for signs of awakening. Finding none, he slowly bent over and licked the cockhead, relishing the taste of freshly showered skin. Clay rose again and studied Carlson's face. The fear overshadowed by lust, his body turned hot, and he felt calm, confident.

He lowered himself again and took the head of Carlson's cock inside his mouth, holding it there. He looked up into the big man's face and saw that eyes were moving rapidly under their lids. He slowly swirled his tongue around the head and felt the cock grow thicker and harder. Clay took more of the cock inside his mouth and stopped again, looking up at the bearded face. Still the eyes moved; still the snoring continued.

A drop of pre-cum oozed onto Clay's tongue, inflaming him. He took deeper strokes and felt the penis flowing in and out of his pliant throat, almost lodging there because of its girth. More pre-cum filled his mouth and he savored it, slowly swallowing it, awed at the effect the man's chemistry was having on him.

Lost in the act, he plunged the cock further into his throat, his nose deeply buried into the powerful man's mat of pubic hair. And then it dawned on him that Carlson's snoring had ceased. Icy fear gripped him and he stopped mid stroke, slowly looking up into a pair of astonished eyes.

To his amazement, Carlson thrust his cock upward and held Clay's head with his large, rough hands. He slowly fucked Clay's mouth, his breathing growing more labored. Soft moans came from his throat as his rhythm increased. His legs began to tremble. His back arched and he growled a low, feral warning that his load was in transit.

Salty, potent jissom ruptured into Clay's mouth, cascading into every available crevice. He swallowed again and again, then felt the big hands fall to the bed, signaling the end of the flood. Swallowing the final drop, Clay retreated to his bed, feeling an increasingly hostile glare from across the room. He imagined the ambivalence—the swings from self-loathing and the thrill of having experienced something exciting, forbidden. He wondered if Carlson would look back over the experience, deeming it "the best blow job ever" . . . or something revolting, something shameful to be forgotten.

Carlson slowly turned over, facing the wall.

Clay knew there would be no trouble. He had no idea what Carlson's attitude would be toward him the ensuing days, but he knew that the man wouldn't relate the incident to someone else. *No way,* thought Clay.

Cocksucker . . . yin . . . yang . . . cum junkie . . . . Savoring the taste in his mouth, he finally fell asleep.

SEVEN

The Following Morning

Clay awakened at three. At first he thought he was still in Houston and half expected to see Michelle lying next to him. Fully awake, he quickly glanced at Carlson, who lay on his back with his hands behind his head. He was staring at the ceiling.

A potpourri of gilt, ambivalence and various other negative emotions seemed to drape over Clay and he truly wished that it had all been a dream. He felt unclean, deranged. He needed to get out of the room fast.

Ignoring Carlson, he abruptly got up and dressed in running shorts, tee shirt and sneakers. Grabbing a towel, he left the room and walked to the gym. Finding it empty, he did twenty minutes each on the stationary bicycle and rower, then another twenty minutes lifting two twelve-pound dumbbells in front of a mirror. He watched as his forearms pumped up full, causing his veins to protrude. He looked down at his crotch, lightly brushing the weights against the bulge, willing his cock to stiffen. Suddenly, he felt a strong compulsion to touch his cock with cold steel. Keeping the entrance in his field of vision, he put down the weights and picked up a solid steel bar with two twenty-five-pound disks at either end. He did curl lifts, rolling the bar over his crotch again and again.

Sweat gathered on his bare chest and forehead as his groin became inflamed. He admired the image and saw something new in his face: maturity. He could somehow project how he would look with another twenty pounds and grey hair . . . and he liked it. So much so that he was determined to hold on to the projection as long as possible before he ejaculated in his shorts.

Two young women walked into the room carrying magazines and talking at the same time. Ignoring Clay, they sought out two stationary bicycles and began to exercise.

His fantasy shattered, Clay grabbed his towel and headed for the showers, where he masturbated twice, giving up on a third try after pumping for fifteen minutes. By the time he had dried off, he realized that he was altered and there was no

turning back. He scoffed at his prior feelings of guilt. "This is me," he whispered to himself. "This is the real me and I won't apologize to anyone."

Drained of all his energy, he returned to his room, determined to force Carlson into a conversation. Somehow, he had to tell Carlson that he wasn't sorry—that he would do it again if given half a chance.

But Carlson had already moved out.

Walking down the hallway on his way out to the parking lot, Clay passed by "A" wing and saw Carlson coming out of his new room. He made a mental note of the room number and watched as the big man disappeared through the exit at the end of the wing. Continuing down the hallway to the main entrance, Clay recognized the man who had rescued him from the mosquitos. He was just ahead and walking slowly while reading a newspaper. "Howdy," said Clay.

The man turned and smiled, flashing blue-green eyes. As he recognized Clay, his smile faded somewhat, then brightened again, as if forced. "Morning. Been attacked by mosquitos lately?"

Clay grinned. "No. I learned my lesson. I work out in the exercise room now. No more walks. It's Burt, isn't it?"

"Uh . . . yeah," stammered Burt. "Sorry, I forgot your name."

"Clay . . . . Clay Pascal." He shuddered as he sensed Burt's powerful chemistry. His throat constricted and became dry as he considered the possibility that Burt was Cheetah. "You headed for your truck?"

"Uh . . . no . . . uh . . . I share it with another engineer." He seemed very nervous suddenly. "I'm taking the bus this morning."

Clay looked ahead and saw the crowd of personnel gathered for buses to the work areas. "Where do you work?"

"Engineering building, just before that big subcontractor yard."

"I'll drop you off," said Clay.

Burt hesitated, then nodded, obviously reluctant.

As Burt silently followed him to the truck, Clay became convinced that he'd located Cheetah. *He just happens to be in the area when I was taking that walk yesterday.* Excitement surged through his body. He opened the driver side door and carefully studied Burt's body as he got inside.

Clay realized that he was staring at his passenger's crotch when Burt turned and regarded him quizzically.

"Is my fly unzipped?" asked Burt dryly.

"I wish it were," Clay said involuntarily, wincing after he said it.

"What's that?"

Clay's face flushed. He was speechless.

"Uhh . . . " Burt opened the door. "I think you got the wrong guy, buddy." He gently closed the door and rushed to an approaching bus.

Clay stared after him, sure now that he wasn't Cheetah, yet concerned over what he would say to others. Again the feelings of gilt and ambivalence surged, but he countered them with a defensive arrogance.

While Clay sullenly looked through a stack of status reports, Bob and Tom talked on their phones, tracking down materials. Heavy footfalls approached the office and Clay looked up. It was Greta and she was obviously upset.

She glanced at Bob and frowned. "That fucking phone must grow out of his goddamned ear!" She turned to Clay. "Could you help me?"

Clay got up and walked out into the hallway. "I'll try. What do you need?"

"Four special butterfly valves. They're thirty-two inch jobbies and Bob promised me last night he'd have them to us this morning." She searched Clay's blank face. "I guess you don't know, huh?" She looked anxiously past Clay. "Get off the damned phone, Bob!"

"In a minute!" yelled Bob.

"I don't have a fucking minute!" she lashed back. "Bob, you know that this is my ass here," she continued more softly. " I didn't go through channels because you promised you'd do it for me."

"The hell I did," grumbled Bob, placing his hand over the receiver.

She barged into the small office. "I got twenty pipefitters just sitting around, scratching their goddamned asses. I got everyone screaming bloody murder at me and accusing me of being too friendly with you. I'm tired of this shit, Bob!"

Bob slammed the receiver down and pushed past Greta. "You got a fuckin' big mouth, bitch," he spat, grabbing his hard hat. "No requisition, no valves." He looked at Clay. "I'm going to a meeting."

Clay frowned. "What meeting? You didn't tell me about a meeting."

Bob's face turned crimson with anger and he stormed out of the office.

Greta crumbled to a chair and began to cry in frustration. " I just lost my job."

"You're a woman after all," said Clay softly.

"What?" She looked up, her face flushing with anger.

"Where are the valves? I'll get them to you."

She sniffed back the tears. "The far northeast corner." She pointed.

"Let's go."

He led Greta to Truck's office. Truck was on the phone and two Teamsters were waiting inside his office.

"Truck," said Clay softly.

Truck glanced at him, then turned away.

"It's important, Truck!" boomed Clay.

Truck lowered the receiver, surprised.

"I need a flatbed and a forklift at the northeast corner right away. There's a couple of careers at stake here." Clay turned and walked out of the office with Greta on his heels.

"I think you pissed him off," said Greta, glancing back anxiously.

Clay led Greta outside and walked into the direction of the valves. Halfway there, they were passed by a flatbed and forklift.

Spending most of his time with Greta at the jobsite, Clay had lunch with her at the craft camp. He was fascinated

with the radical change in ambience. At Clay's camp, there was a montage of cowboy boots; insulated vests; beardless men who would probably be more comfortable in suits; and very young women in tight jeans. At the craft camp there was the endless thumping of work boots; the smell of hard work; burly chests with hair pouring out the top of work shirts; and a sea of bearded faces. Clay felt more at home here. For sure, it was much more sexually stimulating.

Greta and Clay sat at a table for two, sipping coffee.

"I showed him up once too often," she said of Bob.

"If he's that sexist, let him get his nose out of joint," responded Clay.

Greta shook her head. "I *have* to get along with him, Clay. I can't function without the asshole. How do I make it up to him?"

"I'll see what I can do with him. He probably tried to get the material to you, but he's too intimidated by Truck."

"Everyone is." She rolled up her eyes.

"How do you get along with your teamsters?" asked Clay.

She smiled. "Oh, great. They're a great bunch of guys and gals. I date one of them."

Clay grinned.

"One of the guys, not the gals," she quickly said. "Everyone thinks I'm a dyke."

"I wonder why," mumbled Clay.

She slapped at him playfully.

"You've seen just about all the Teamsters up here, haven't you?" he asked.

"I suppose so."

"Have you ever come across one from Washington state with vivid green eyes? Stocky, powerful dude, sort of quiet." Clay studied her as she appeared thoughtful. "My girl friend back in Houston—she's looking for her brother. They were separated through adoption and that's the only information she has."

"Jesus, that rings a bell. Let's see . . ." She searched her mind. "Green eyes . . ."

"Vivid green eyes," Clay corrected.

"No, he has blue eyes," she mused. Her face suddenly lit up. "My sweety has blue-green eyes. But I know his real mother." She chuckled, then frowned. "Wait a minute . . . . Oh, what's his name . . . at Cold Storage. He works for Harris—a heavy equipment operator. Works out of the big warehouse in back. Jake? Jack? Jed! That's his name: Jed."

Clay's pulse quickened and he leaned forward.

"He's bulging with muscles and has the most incredible eyes I've ever seen. Good looking man, too. I heard he's from Yakima."

"How old?"

"Probably about fifty. He has salt and pepper hair, beard."

Clay sighed. "Probably not him. The chances are pretty slim that she'll ever find him." He couldn't wait to get back to Cold Storage.

That afternoon, Clay narrowed his sights on Jed Brewster. He found that some gaskets he needed were stored in the big warehouse, so he went looking for them.

Jed was re-stacking bins nearby with a fork-equipped, front end loader. Twice, the powerfully built man glanced at Clay, seemingly aware of his stare. Excited, Clay approached him.

Jed turned off the huge forklift. "Yeah, whatcha got?"

As Clay got near the man, he became stunned by the color of his eyes. They were bright, lime-green. His bearded face was handsome, his body apparently saturated with brute strength.

"You okay?" asked Jed.

"Uh . . . I'm looking for . . . some three-sixteen stainless gaskets." Clay stared at his large, hairy hands, featuring thumbs three times the width of his own.

"What size?"

"Uh . . . sixteen inch." Clay struggled to regain his composure.

"Right where you were." Jed nodded down the aisle.

"Thanks," mumbled Clay, tearing himself away and seeking out the gaskets. He heard the sound of the forklift starting up again, then disappearing outside.

"Cheetah . . . ." Clay's body shook. He frantically looked around for a toilet as his cock swiftly reached erection and threatened to climax.

As Tom and Bob flirted with the secretaries in the computer room, Clay carefully listened to the radio transmissions among the Teamsters. Having found out the call numbers of Jed Brewster, he waited. And finally it came.

"Two-twenty-two to three-seventeen," Truck called to Jed Brewster.

"Three-seventeen," answered Jed.

The man's low, resonant voice seemed hauntingly mellifluous to Clay, causing his arm hair to tingle.

"Yeah, Jed, what's your twenty?"

"J Pad, Truck. Some of this pipe is buried in the mud. Have to dig it out. Whatcha got?"

"I left my tape measure in the module there. You want to pick it up on your way back?"

"Sure thing, Truck."

"Thanks. Two-twenty-two out."

Clay quickly left for J Pad.

As he pulled onto the pad, Clay saw that there was no one else there. He felt giddy as he got out of his truck and walked to Jed's forklift.

Jed spotted him and killed the motor. "Still looking for gaskets?"

"No," said Clay, his voice dry and threatening to crack. He produced a list from his pocket. "Bob thought it would be a good training exercise if I looked for a shitload of lost material. I think he's just trying to get rid of me."

Jed smiled and got off the big machine. "Maybe I can help you out." He took the sheet of paper. "Hell, this is easy." He looked toward the far corner of the pad. "The six inch pipe is there and the gate valves are over there." He pointed to the opposite side.

Clay stared into his eyes.

[Continued on page36]

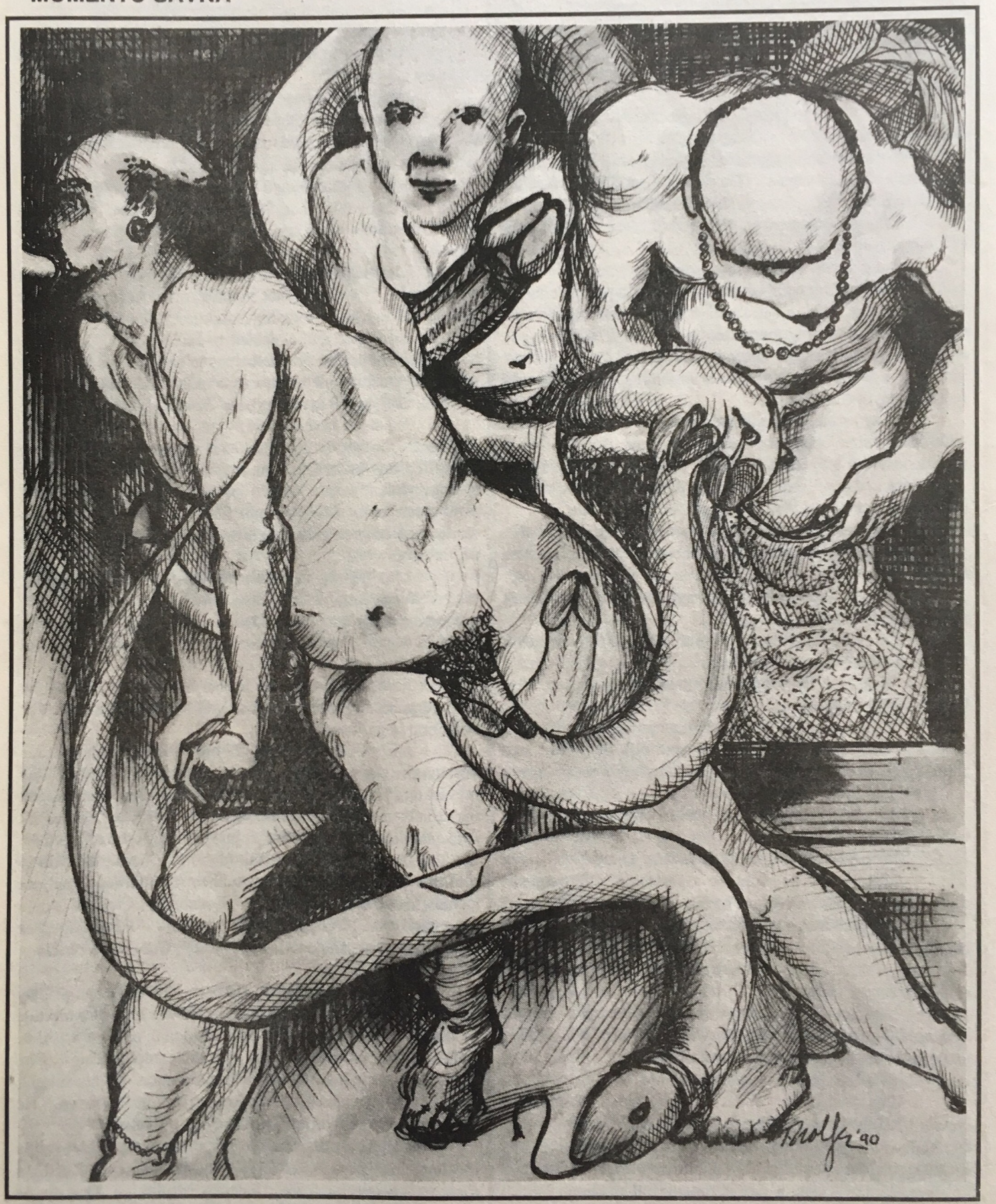
TWO NEW ARTISTS

ROSCOE HARDIE, thirtyish and slim, is an artist/musician who lives in New York. He is an ardent admirer of older, hirsute, corpulent, avuncular types with brains and sense of humor.

"Daddy's Secret"

NEXT PAGE: WOLF is a 50ish New England artist who has some impressive credentials: Pratt Institute graduate of '58, MacDowell Fellow, Massachusetts College of Art graduate of '57, AIR Am. Col. Suisse, '69-'70.

MOMENTO SAVNA



Jed eyed him suspiciously. "Aren't you going to write down the locations?"

Clay dumbly looked down at the paper and fumbled for a pen in his shirt pocket. He wrote down the locations, his hands trembling.

"Are you sure there's nothing's wrong with you, man?"

Clay's face reddened. "I'm sorry. It's just that I've never seen a man with eyes like yours."

A gradual smile appeared on Jed's face. "Yeah, I get a lot of flack about my eyes." He walked past Clay toward the storage module. "People say I have a woman's eyes."

Clay followed him. "Good God, there's nothing female about *you*."

Jed glanced back at Clay, obviously amused.

Clay perceived himself looking like a puppy, chasing after his master. His embarrassment notwithstanding, he continued to follow the big man into the module. *I'm blowing it, I'm blowing it. I'm supposed to be luring him!*

"Your stud bolts are over in that corner," continued Jed, looking at Clay warily.

Clay wrote the location down, then lowered the list with a huge sigh. He felt the rush of a fever, as if he'd been devastated with a virulent bacteria. His face burning, he became weak and confused. He sat heavily on a crate, knowing he had to gain control.

Jed was immediately concerned and came to him, placing a huge hand against his forehead. "You don't have a fever."

"The problem is in my mind, not my body," said Clay, staring into Jed crotch.

Jed pulled his hand away and followed Clay's gaze to his crotch. He took two steps back.

"You look like someone I cared for very much,"Clay lied. "He's dead now."

"I see," said Jed, obviously not convinced.

"It's incredible how much you look like him," said Clay, trying to keep his voice steady. *Oh, fuck, I'm blowing it.*

"Uh huh." Jed grinned.

Clay noticed the grin. "I guess I must be acting pretty weird, huh?"

"You like guys, right?" Jed sat on a crate.

Clay thought he could see compassion in the exquisite eyes. "Bi," said Clay shyly. "I have a lady friend in Houston."

"To each his own," Jed responded. "I pick my friends based on how sincere they are. Had a couple of gay friends once: two or three bi types—male and female." He smiled. "I won't tell anyone about you."

"Thanks." Clay probed deeply into the eyes. *Are you Cheetah? You have your cue, Volodin. Take your bait.* "Have you ever had your cock sucked by a man?"

"I had a couple of guys try it."

Clay shuddered. "What'd you do, punch them out?"

Jed frowned and shook his head. "No, I didn't mean that way. I'm a pretty nonviolent person. No, I mean that I let a couple of close friends try it to see if it did anything for me."

"Did it?" Clay's cock sprang to full erection.

"Not a thing," said Jed, crossing his arms, reflecting on the memories. "I always maintained that if a man became violent at the thought of having sex with another man, then he was probably suppressing something. That's why I tried it. I've always wanted to be honest with myself."

Encouraged, Clay smiled. "So? What happened? Did they get you off?"

Jed shook his head. "I was as limp as a dishrag. I only tried it a second time because the guy was a friend and I wanted to . . . well, I guess I wanted to be friendly. He finally jacked off after he realized he couldn't get me hard."

"How about doing it for me?" asked Clay softly.

Jed got to his feet. "I guess I'd better not." He looked around the module. "I have to find Truck's tape and get on back."

Clay pulled out his cock, astounded that he was acting so bizarrely. "I've never met a man like you before, Jed. Just stand there and let me look at you while I jack off."

Jed turned and chuckled at the sight of Clay's cock. "You better hope that no one comes in and catches you." He nervously walked to the doorway, looking both ways.

Clay began to masturbate. *Bite, Cheetah. BITE!*

Jed stood in the doorway, facing Clay. The sunlight was so bright that he appeared as a silhouette. Still jacking himself, Clay walked to him and slowly knelt. His hands shaking violently, he unzipped Jed's trousers and pulled out a semi-erect cock. *Liar*, thought Clay. In Clay's hands, the medium-sized cock grew quickly. It was clean and dry—void of pre-cum.

Clay noisily and wetly sucked Jed's cock, furiously masturbating through the thick, hard legs. A salty liquid poured into Clay's mouth and he hungrily swallowed, spurting his own semen into a high arc and down to the pad gravel outside.

Immediately zipping up his trousers, Jed found the tape measure and left without saying a word. His face was contorted in guilt and revulsion.

Liar . . . fucking liar. "I only tried it a second time because the guy was a friend and I wanted to be friendly," Clay mimicked. He milked the residue from his urethra and shook the excess cum off his cockhead. Positive that Jed wasn't Cheetah—the guilt reaction was just too vivid—he relished the fact that he had just taken his third load. It began to occur to him that his gut feelings were authentic—that men sent out signals about their availability. Eventually, Cheetah would send the signal. And Clay would be ready. *I'll brazenly suck every cock on the slope until I find yours, Comrade Volodin.*

Having attended a wild party at Greta's camp, Clay started back to his camp after eleven. He was high on a mixture of scotch and brandy, with an occasional puff of hashish. Relieved after he safely pulled into the camp parking lot, he sighed and made his way into a side entrance. To his delight, Carlson was just ahead, attempting to get into his room. He was drunk and kept dropping his key on the floor.

Clay unlocked Carlson's door and helped him inside the two-man room. To Clay's disappointment, Carlson's roommate was lying asleep, wearing earphones. Quietly, he helped Carlson to the other bed, where the huge man sat.

Carlson looked up at him and held his finger to his lips, finally pointing at his roommate.

Carlson looked back at Clay, squinting. "You . . ."

"Why did you leave?" whispered Clay.

"Get the fuck out of here," slurred Carlson, lying back and turning on his side.

Clay groped him, but Carlson pushed his hand away.

Do I detect a little halfheartedness?

Clay groped him again but Carlson's rejection was weaker. He unzipped Carlson's trousers and dug out the penis he was determined to have. His eyes frozen on the other man, he lovingly sucked Carlson's cock.

Flaccid for ten minutes, the penis suddenly came to life, and Carlson's eyes opened wide. The big man massaged Clay's neck and ran his fingers through Clay's hair. "Sonofabitch cocksucker," he grumbled softly.

The roommate mumbled something in his sleep and turned over, facing Carlson's bed.

Clay stopped and looked up at Carlson, who was staring at his roommate. Soon, the man began to snore again.

Carlson looked back at Clay and softly growled, "Suck . . . . Hard."

Clay devoured him, grabbing the two massive balls with both hands and squeezing gently. Now ignoring the other man, Clay monitored Carlson's eyes. *They're focusing past me, no doubt being entertained by some delicious fantasy about a hot fox. Now your lids are getting heavy and your eyes are starting to close and a smile comes to your lips. And your lips part, showing me a tongue in search of tits, a vulva. I smell the bourbon on your hot breath. Now you're beginning to breathe heavily and you wedge your cock further into my throat. Now your fat hands are pulling at my hair and your legs are hard as a fucking rock and your belly is trembling and your balls are churning up all that live juice. Now you're frantically licking that juicy pussy, grimacing around your tongue so ugly . . . so obscene.*

Hotly thin, sweet jissom streamed down Clay's throat. Clay quelled the spasms, swallowing three, four, five times, belching the trapped air. He propped up the stilled, wilting cock, and watched the piss slit as it seeped a final drop of semen. He took Carlson's limp hand and wiped a thick finger over the slit, finally licking the drop off the finger.

Carlson began to snore in a duet with the other man.

Clay silently got to his feet and backed slowly out of the room, relishing the sight of Carlson's glistening finger.

Hurrying to the toilet, he locked himself inside a stall and masturbated, spurting semen over the wall and three panels, gleefully spinning around and around.

Yin . . . cocksucker . . . seducer slut . . . four down and one million to go.

EIGHT

The Following Week

Having moved into Frank's room earlier that day, Clay was in an ebullient mood. He was looking forward to handling the job on his own and possibly coming closer to an encounter with Cheetah. He saw Frank, Bob and Greta off at the airport and quickly drove back to the administration building for a big meeting with both P-R-K and Harris personnel.

Arriving just in time, Clay scanned the room, recognizing his project manager, project construction manager, project engineer and all the discipline engineers. He recognized the P-R-K brass, but several of the others were strangers. He assumed they were P-R-K craft superintendents, each responsible for certain segments of construction.

The Harris project manager shouted out for the meeting to start, and three men entered the room from a hallway outside. The room got quiet. Clay slowly poured over the line of P-R-K personnel and found four men who could be Cheetah. One man he'd never seen before had green eyes and a well developed upper body. Clay judged that he was in his late forties.

The meeting dragged on for forty-five minutes before the subject of materials came up.

"By the way, we have two new materials people with us today," said the project manager. He pointed at Clay. "Clay Pascal just joined us last week. He's Bob Weeks' alternate. Welcome aboard, Clay."

Clay nodded, flushing as all eyes were on him.

"And we have Greta Thompson's alternate, Alex Douglass." He gestured toward a man Clay hadn't noticed. "Welcome to you, too."

Alex raised his hand and nodded. He was a rather clean-cut engineering type, with glasses, brown eyes, short-cut salt and pepper hair and round face. He was dressed in a shirt that was too large for him, making him look smaller than he really was. There was no way Clay could see any muscle definition in the man's arms or chest, but his hands were remarkable. They were broad, with thick, hairy fingers. As he looked closer, Clay wondered if Alex were a lot like Clark Kent.

"Clay," said the project manager, "what's the status on the pipe spools from Pittsburgh? I guess those spools are the most critical item on our list today."

"As of this morning, the barge was just pulling into the port at Anchorage," answered Clay nervously. "They should be unloaded onto flatbeds and re-shipped by tomorrow afternoon. Uhh . . . the ETA is about Friday afternoon." Clay knew that all eyes were on him, but he could feel an especially intense gaze. Wondering if it came from Cheetah, Clay scanned the faces again.

"That's encouraging," said the project manager. "Any other materials problem?" He looked around the room.

P-R-K's project manager, a short, brash, surprisingly young man with long hair, threw a pencil down on the table. "The piping for the flare work. I know you guys authorized us to buy it, but why did Bob Weeks wait so long to tell us it wasn't here? For *months* we were led to believe that it was at Cold Storage Pad. I'll bet a month's salary that it's on one of the other pads, mixed up with the materials for six other contractors."

"We've discussed that before, Jerry," said the Harris project manager softly. "The damage has been done. Somebody fucked up—bad. We've already acknowledged that there'll be a surplus of materials. Now, *time* is of the essence on this job, not *cost*, because if we don't get the fucker built pretty

soon, it'll cost us our *ass*."

There was a murmur among the group of men as the Harris project manager abruptly went on to another subject.

Clay met his P-R-K counterpart's gaze and realized that he was the one staring. Clay pretended not to notice, but Alex's stare was intense. Clay looked at him again and was surprised to see him smiling and shaking his head derisively. Intimidated, Clay looked away, only to be drawn back. The man seemed to be having trouble suppressing a laugh.

Finally, the meeting ended and Clay eagerly left the building. He was upset with the look Alex had given him and wondered if he'd said something during the meeting that gave him away as having no experience. A growing feeling of nausea dissipated as he inhaled the cool Arctic air. He looked at his watch and realized that he had to get back to his office to mark up a week-old status report for a new issue. He began walking toward his vehicle.

A P-R-K pickup pulled up to his right. It was Alex. "Got a minute?" he asked.

Clay stopped. "Yeah, what do you need?"

The man pointed toward the spine road. "I found some material at J Pad you've been looking for. Hop in and I'll show you."

Clay looked at his watch again. "How about tomorrow? I have to get my status reports going."

Alex shrugged. "Doesn't mean a fuck to me, Clay, but I think this material is more important than your reports. It's the material for the flare work."

Clay's jaw dropped. "Why didn't you say something in the meeting?"

"I'll explain. Get in." It sounded like an order instead of a request.

Clay reluctantly got in on the passenger side. He felt offended by Alex's dominant tone. After all, *he* was the client. *He* represented the owner.

Alex drove out to J Pad in silence as Clay studied him askance.

Clay found Alex's large hands exciting and wondered if he would eventually become so deranged that virtually any part of a burly man's anatomy would throw him into a frenzy of desire. The thought amused him and he chuckled to himself. He allowed himself to play the hand attraction for all it was worth, fantasizing scrubbing the hand perfectly clean and sucking on the thick fingers and thumb. The fantasy caused a stirring up of the juices in his groin.

The low sun illuminated Alex's profile and Clay noticed how the sun rays played on his eyes and sunglasses. The sunglass lenses became a brilliant purple and Alex's right eye revealed a thin slice of brown, covering a vivid, tourmaline green. Clay became mesmerized and wondered where the green came from.

"How long've you been up here?" asked Clay, for the sake of small talk.

"Just got here, as a matter of fact." He glanced at Clay, destroying the delicate light show. "I was hired as a warehouseman, but they decided to make me Greta's alternate because of my background. Kept me in Seattle another week for special training . . . . I guess she threatened to quit if she didn't get some relief—hell, she's been on the Slope for two months without a break."

"Wait a minute. Let me get this straight. You just arrived on the Slope and you find the goddamned pipe that's almost shut down the job?" Clay looked at him squarely, noticing for the first time how the man was put together. "What are you? Superman?"

"Greta found it, but she didn't want to blow Bob Weeks' mind with it. Besides, she figured it would be a great way for us to start off on the right foot together." His body was stocky and well-proportioned. His arms almost filled the too-large shirt. His face became more and more handsome each time Clay looked at him.

Clay forced his gaze away from Alex and out the window for the duration of the trip. A powerful attraction to Alex was forming in his mind; he was feeling more and more helpless each time he looked at the man. Worse, when he asked himself if this man could be Cheetah, a voice in his head seemed to say, "The one and only." Finally, he glanced at Alex's crotch and saw the bulge. He clenched his teeth to keep them from clattering.

The pad was unoccupied and Clay knew that the Cold Storage Teamsters wouldn't be out so late anyway. He became terrified.

Alex did a U-turn so that the pickup faced the entrance, affording him a three-mile warning of any approaching vehicle. He sighed heavily and faced Clay, his back against the door. "We have some serious things to talk about."

"You're Cheetah," Clay said flatly.

Alex seemed impressed. "Very good. What gave me away?"

"The sun refracted through your eyes. You have a brown film over your eyes, apparently." Clay shook his head. "I had no idea there were such contacts, but leave it up to science."

Alex smiled. "Well, I have to give you credit for that. Frankly, I didn't expect it." His expression turned serious. "Neither did the people who recruited you."

"What do you mean?" Clay felt vaguely numb, as if he had entered a dream world.

Alex studied him. "You *are* Clay Pascal, you see, and you were a Navy Seal and . . . . But I'm sure they impressed you with all that shit, didn't they? Hell, I can tell you when you were born, too, and I can dazzle you with the knowledge that you lived in a town house apartment on South Braeswood in Houston."

"Is this the part where you pull out a pistol and shoot me?" Clay asked, his voice fragile.

Alex laughed heartily, patting his torso and belt line. "Which book did you get that from?" He laughed harder, then calmed down. "No, I'm not going to kill you, provided you don't do something stupid. The CIA is a different matter though. They're *planning* to kill you."

Clay felt awkward, had no idea what he was supposed to do next. Suddenly, the situation seemed out of hand and complex.

"You don't believe me?" asked Alex. "If I know

you're entire life history, then wouldn't it follow that I'd know what they plan on doing with you?"

Clay was speechless and embarrassed over his sense of helplessness.

"They recruit guys like you all the time and no one ever hears from them again." Alex studied Clay. "You want more? I'll give you a shitload. You sucked your first cock the night before you came up here. A CIA agent called T.J. You met him at a video arcade in Houston. You had a girl friend by the name of Michelle . . . . More?"

Clay's mind began to reel; he felt nauseated.

Alex watched Clay's face turn ashen. "Not in the fucking truck, damnit! Throw up outside!"

Clay opened the door swiftly and rushed away from the car, throwing up his lunch. Alex fetched a thermos bottle and poured out a cup of coffee, then pulled out several facial tissues from a bag in the truck bed. He handed the tissues to Clay, who wiped his mouth and frowned at Alex's unexpected kindness. Clay took the coffee and sipped it, looking at the man in amazement.

Alex walked to an empty wooden platform and climbed on top. He gazed down the road and saw that no one was coming. "I think I'd better tell you everything . . . at the risk of fucking up my own career. You're so goddamned green that you'll end up getting both of us killed. Don't make me yell, damnit! Come up here!"

Clay warily joined him on the platform.

"Everything they told you about me is probably true," he began. "But there are *some* things . . . recent things . . . that no one knows about. Now my instincts tell me that I can trust you and those instincts never lie to me. My intuitive mind's kept me alive against very unfavorable odds for a whole bunch of years. So, if I can trust you, then you'd better trust me, okay?"

Clay nodded tentatively.

"This whole idea was stupid, recruiting some greenhorn that looks like Misha. They've done some pretty stupid things, but that has to be the most inept." He gave Clay an admiring look. "Granted, I was pretty impressed with how much you look like Misha. Hell, we knew about the plan before you even got up here. You think you have sources in the KGB? We have just as many with the CIA, maybe more." He shook his head sadly. "They really did a number on you, Clay. You have no training and that Seal commando training was how many years ago? Don't you see that you're expendable? They don't give a shit about you. Even if we hadn't gotten word of their plan and even if I'd fallen for the ploy, they wouldn't have let you come back alive. You have to see that, Clay. They promise you lots of money? I'll bet they had you sign forms to set up a Swiss bank account, didn't they?"

Clay looked at him dumbly.

"Worthless, Clay. It's not done that way. They've done this before." Alex scanned the horizon again, this time flinching at the sight of a truck two miles away on another roadway. "Quick, over here." Alex jumped off the platform and walked toward a rack of large diameter pipe.

Clay joined him, looking back at the truck, which had come to a stop.

Alex pointed at the pipe. "There are three CIA agents up here in the Slope, watching every move you make. Two are in that pickup, probably looking at us with powerful binoculars. If you're bugged, then we've had it." He banged a pipe with his hand. "Goddamnit, I completely forgot about that."

Clay rubbed over his jacket. "I don't see how they could've."

Alex smiled patiently.

And then Clay realized that his allegiance had insidiously begun to change. By assuring him that there were no bugs, Clay was near believing Alex, trusting him.

"We'll check after they leave. Keep your back turned to them and pretend to be talking about the pipe. *There is no way they've made me.* They're looking for a heavier-looking man with green eyes and a beard. They think Cheetah is a craft worker." He chuckled. "They'd shit if they knew that I was a manager with P-R-K."

"Then why are they looking at us now?" Clay pointed at another rack of pipe.

Alex walked in that direction, keeping his back to the distant truck. "Routine. They follow you everywhere in an assortment of vehicles to keep from spooking me. But it's logical for the P.R.K. materials manager to be out here with you. If you're not bugged now, they won't suspect a thing."

"Who are they? I got the impression the CIA boys would stay in Deadhorse out of sight."

Alex glanced around at the truck, which began to move on. "They got three, maybe four inside the camp with you. I know the identity of only one. I recognize the others by their actions."

Clay was astounded. "I . . . I thought . . . they *said* that they had no connections with Harris Oil except through my big boss."

"That's the only connection they need. He lets them do whatever they want." Alex saw that the truck had disappeared; hewalked toward the module in the center of the pad. "Let's look for bugs."

Clay reluctantly followed Alexei into the module.

Alex took off Clay's hard hat and jacket, carefully going over both with his hands. He unbuttoned Clay's shirt and methodically scrutinized each button, each seam. He unbuckled Clay's belt and took his jeans down searching every square inch.

A slightly dulled feeling of excitement crept over Clay, rendering his dread less intense. A feeling of mental imbalance joined the excitement, causing him to mistrust his perception of reality.

"Pull your pants up and take off your boots." Alex looked thoughtfully at the boots.

Clay sat on a crate, taking off one boot for inspection, then the other.

The search completed, Alex sighed in relief. "You're clean." He sat on an adjacent crate.

"Why are you protecting me?" asked Clay, dressing.

"I'm using you, Clay," said Alex bluntly. "Unlike you, I'm here alone, so I can use all the help I can get."

"What kind of help?"

"The obvious help in locating the data, for starters.

And in return for that little favor, I'm prepared to save your ass and get you off the Slope."

Clay shook his head forlornly. "I just don't understand, Alex. None of this makes any sense to me.

"Okay, let me put it another way: You're a dead man, Clay. You know too much. You just don't have much of a choice."

"But you're asking me to be a traitor to my own country."

Alex laughed bitterly. "They're *Soviet* secrets, Clay. If they were American secrets, I could understand your concern."

Clay considered this and nodded. "So I get off the Slope in one piece. They know where I live."

"You can't go back," Alex said softly.

Clay was crestfallen. "Jesus . . . why . . . why did I agree to do this?"

Alex looked at him compassionately. "There might be a way. I have more to tell you, but I have to trust you first." He knelt and placed a hand on Clay's knee. "A pact, okay? Just like a couple of best buddies. You swear to protect and stick by me and I'll do the same."

"That just doesn't make any . . . . It's weird, Alex." Clay shook his head, confused and frustrated. He wondered where all his bravado and ruggedness had gone.

"It'll make sense in another twenty-four hours, I promise you." Alex slowly rose and walked to the doorway, looking out over the expanse of tundra and distant pads. No vehicles were in sight.

Clay walked past him, stepping outside. He stared off into space, seeking solace in trying to think about nothing but an endless panorama of ponds, lakes, caribou, pipelines and oil wells. Instead, he was reminded of his overpowering feeling of ultimate loneliness and bewilderment.

Alex stepped back inside the darkness of the module. "Come here a minute."

Clay turned and looked at him, his expression desolate.

"Come here," Alex insisted.

Clay joined him, closing his eyes as Alex kissed him tenderly on the lips.

The Russian opened up both their jackets and pressed his chest next to Clay's, still kissing him. His writhing tongue probed inside Clay's mouth. "You don't look like Misha . . . . You look like Clay Pascal . . . and you look good enough to eat."

Clay was immobile, his rational mind struggling to comprehend what was happening. He felt his body radiating warmth for this man he'd been conditioned to fear and hate. His body became pliant and was absorbed inside Alex's aura. It was as if he had slipped inside a hovering, transcendental cocoon. The sweet, clean taste of Alex's saliva aroused his senses, sweeping him away, severing his moorings to solid ground. He responded first with his tongue, then with his hands, slipping them under the Russian's shirt and exploring the hard, hirsute torso. He sucked in Alex's saliva, savoring it, swallowing it as if it were the ultimate nutrient.

They unbuttoned each other's shirt in concert, each pondering the look of expectancy in the other.

"Who are you? Good God, who am I?" asked Clay, terrified, delirious. "God, there's nothing left of me that I recognize."

Alex ripped open Clay's shirt, attacking his breasts, sucking, biting, humming hot air into his blond chest hair. A large, powerful hand explored Clay's crotch, roughly unzipping the bulging jeans and pulling them down. He slid down Clay's body until his knees touched the floor, then turned and slowly lay with his back on the floor. Clay stood over him, enchanted at the sight of Alex's fluttering, inviting tongue. He milked his cock, slowly severing a stretched drop of pre-cum, aiming it for Alex's mouth, taking childish delight in watching it find its mark.

As Alex took out his own penis, Clay knelt, directing his cock into Alex's throat, seeking the Russian's thick cock for his own. Clay performed beyond his wildest dreams. He seduced the fat, reddish flesh like a man high on a powerful aphrodisiac. It was as if he'd taken over the body of a toothless, world-class cocksucker, bent on giving Alex the most electrifying sex he'd ever experienced. He felt as if his body had become coincident with that of his partner. He could sense fluids raging through Alex's groin, triggering the same motion in his. He could hear the pounding of Alex's heartbeat. *Was that two beating as one? The breathing . . . in and out . . . the same. We're one . . . we're one . . . we come as one . . . coming . . . COMING . . .*

Both men groaned in unison; semen gushed in harmonious synchrony.

I fall from the earth. . . . yin . . . cocksucker . . .

Clay sat on the passenger side of Alex's pickup, looking straight ahead, depressed.

"You don't have all your oars in the water, Clay," said Alex, studying him. "What did I do, fuck you up?"

Clay looked at him helplessly, wondering what to say. "Just give me a minute." He chuckled. "I took a wrong turn back there, I guess."

Alex rested his forehead against the steering wheel. "Shit, I didn't bargain for this. I don't *need* this." He glanced at Clay. "You're my damned death warrant."

The statement brought a chill down Clay's body. The implications were enormous. Clay became angry at himself and tried to reach somewhere within the mind of the man who had killed eleven Viet Cong with just a knife and bare hands. He sought the man whose instincts were compared with that of a tiger. He sought the yang.

Alex watched the variety of emotions flash across Clay's face, then suddenly he started up the pickup and grabbed the radio. "Twenty-six to base." He tore down the gravel road.

"Base. Yeah, Alex, what's cooking?"

"Do me a favor, will you? Call the Cold Storage Pad and tell them that Clay Pascal is with me. We're headed out to Deadhorse to look at a rebuilt valve they need out at the flares. We'll be gone about an hour and a half. Okay?"

"Roger."

"Twenty-six out."

"Base out."

Alex stared straight ahead, his determination obvious. "The problem is, you don't believe me yet, in spite of the fact that we just had the best goddamned sex either of us ever had."

Clay smiled wanly. "I feel like I'm in a dream."

"I know."

"Have you ever been so confused that you wondered if all your cylinders were hitting or not?"

"No. Is that how you feel?"

"Yes."

"And I did that to you?" asked Alex.

"Yes, you did . . . asshole." Clay looked at him playfully.

The Russian sighed, relieved. "That's more like it."

Alex pulled the pickup into a small parking lot outside a tool shop in Deadhorse. "If you see someone familiar, just pretend you didn't see them. Got that?"

"Familiar?"

"Clay, do you understand me?" Alex seemed irritated.

"Yeah, I understand. I'm okay." He reached for his hard hat in the seat and got out.

Alex put on a ball cap and led the way inside an office module, adjacent to a machine shop.

They stood at a counter and a woman approached them. "Hi, guys. What can I do for you?"

"You still have any of those rebuilt gate valves? I'm looking for some temporary stuff for a shut down."

She smiled. "Sure do. They're next door in the shop. Just follow me."

The woman walked through a side door into the machine shop, Alex and Clay following. Halfway to the back of the building, she pointed at a pallet filled with valves. Alex nodded toward the opposite wall for Clay's benefit, then knelt to inspect the valves.

Clay glanced in that direction and saw three glass-enclosed offices. In the first, two women sat typing. The second was empty and dark. Clay inched toward the last office until he could see inside. A man with earphones sat at a desk, reading a magazine, oblivious to Clay. It was T.J.

Clay quickly turned, almost tripping, joining Alex and the woman out of T.J.'s sight.

Alex regarded Clay's ashen face and stood up. "No, those won't do. Sorry," said Alex, abruptly heading for the truck, followed anxiously by Clay.

Alex started the motor and studied Clay. "He's listening through a bug in your room. Plus he's probably monitoring all the reports from the other agents through a remote CB channel. This is a big operation."

Clay felt more in control and less helpless. He was angry. "They lied to me. T.J. was supposed to go to Europe. There were supposed to be only a couple of agents on standby here in Deadhorse."

Alex drove in silence, glancing periodically at Clay.

"I'm okay now, Alex," said Clay at length. "I'll hold my end up, I swear to God," he said, betraying a hint of menace.

"My real name is Dmitri Alexei Volodin. Glad to meet you, Clayton Robert Pascal," the Russian said, patting Clay's leg. "When we leave this place, you call me Alexei, okay?"

Clay grinned, his faculties with him again. "I just might be calling you something else by then." His grin faded. "You say, 'when we leave this place' . . . . I know where *you're* going, but where do I go?"

"We go together, but not to the Soviet Union." He hesitated, then said, "What the hell, I might as well really blow your mind."

Clay turned and faced him. "Okay, let's have it. No punches pulled."

"Okay." Alexei sighed deeply. "Until six months ago, I always thought that Misha had been killed by a West German operative—a man called Kalbsach. Misha was killed in seventy-six, near Frankfurt . . . shot. It seemed logical that Kalbsach was aiming for me and that Misha was killed accidentally. For years, I volunteered for dangerous missions throughout western Europe. I killed not only Kalbsach, but dozens more. I was given free reign because I was becoming a terrifying legend—a killing machine that everyone was afraid of." His eyes misted over, giving the moment a sense of utter incongruity. "Then, six months ago, while I was working on my new cover in Seattle, I ran into a retired KGB. We were friends at one time long ago. He'd come into the U.S. by way of Canada and was living here illegally. He was in a very bad way with cancer and emphysema. Maybe that's why he told me the truth about Misha." A tear rolled down his cheek. "He said that the KGB had killed Misha because they were afraid that I would lose my effectiveness, become too soft. " More tears flowed. "They were afraid that I was too close to him, that I might defect and take Misha with me." He fell silent, wiping his tears away.

Clay placed his hand on Alexei's shoulder, then pulled it back as they reached the security check point, indicating the beginning of Harris Oil's lease boundary.

The security guard greeted them, holding a pad.

"Douglass . . . P-R-K," said Alexei.

"Pascal . . . Harris." Clay hoped that they wouldn't search the pickup, something they did with contractors on occasion. He wanted to immediately hear more about this incredible man.

The guard tipped his cap and gestured for them to pass.

Clay waited patiently until Alexei was ready to resume.

Near J Pad, Alexei said, "I have no intention of returning to the Soviet Union." He looked at Clay lovingly. "Looks like it's you and me against the world."

"Then let's go for it," Clay said flatly.

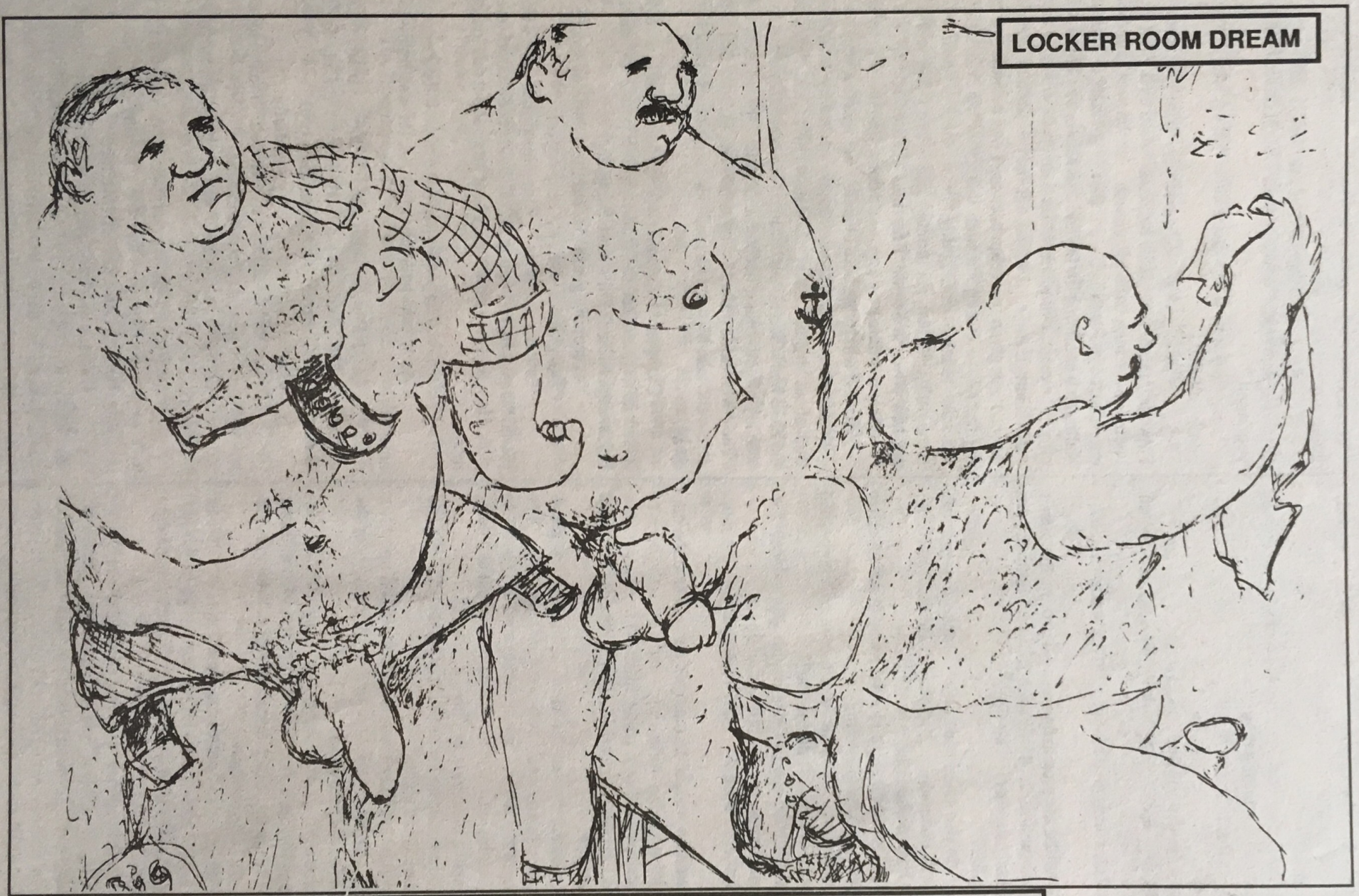
Alexei looked at J Pad and winked. "I fell in love with you in that module today, you know that?"

"Pretty strong words," said Clay, still unable to believe all he'd been told.

The Russian became serious. "You really don't have to love me, you know. You have to stay with me out of necessity, but you don't have to love me."

"I'll have to admit that I've never met a man quite like you." Clay looked back at J Pad. "If I ever fell in love with a man, I'd hope it would be someone like you." Clay made a sour face. "God, that sounds patronizing, doesn't it?" He regarded

[Continued on page 44]



BIG EDDIE is 66, pink, hairless, stocky, nicely edowed and lives in New York. He likes his men butch, burly, barrel chested and beer bellied; he does the book with hunks, 35 and older.

LOCKER ROOM BULL

Alex seriously. "You know what I mean, don't you?"

Alex nodded.

"Sex is one thing, but loving . . . well, that's something else entirely." Clay chuckled and shook his head. "The sex angle itself has already blown my mind . . . ."

Alexei grabbed his hand and squeezed it. "Fair enough. Okay, listen carefully. The data is in the form of a diskette, not a microdot or microfilm, like the CIA thinks. It's very hard to hide, but there are ways. It has to be in your room, well hidden." He hesitated, deep in thought. " I'll drop you off at your car and you can go back to work. Don't jeopardize that yet. I'll do the same and, after dinner, I'll come to your room. We'll talk shop for the benefit of T.J. while I look for the diskette. They won't think it's odd that I'm there."

"I don't see why they would."

"Are you supposed to call Houston?"

Clay shook his head in wonderment. "You know everything, don't you? Yeah, I'm supposed to call tonight."

Alexei smiled. "You won't tell them about me."

Clay lifted Alexei's big hand and kissed it. "What do *you* think?"

Sitting inside his truck, Clay watched as Alexei drove away, disappearing into the growing darkness. A chilling anxiety drifted over him as he headed for the office.

As expected, he was chewed out by his project manager for missing several meetings. Even the Harris materials manager was upset and Clay was concerned that he would complain to his CIA contacts. He apologized to both managers, maintaining that it would never happen again, then tried to concentrate on getting out his reports. Unable to focus upon anything, he left at quitting time with all the other employees.

Placing a chef's salad inside a carry-out container, he took it to his room and had a double Scotch. Realizing that the Scotch would have no effect on relaxing his stomach, he tried to eat the salad to no avail. It felt like rocks in his stomach. He turned on the black and white television he'd purchased for $80 and watched the news.

At the assigned time of seven o'clock, he turned down the television and called Houston. He assumed that the number was for a telephone booth. It rang four times.

"Hello?" The voice sounded like that of Skip, T.J.'s partner.

"Hello, this is Clay."

"Yes, Clay. Report, please."

"Still no contact yet. There are hundreds of men here who could be Cheetah, but none've come forward. Sorry."

"Then call us tomorrow, same time. By the way, the manager at Cold Storage complained about you today. He said that you were gone all day, looking for some valves."

"That's an exaggeration. I was in the office today, went to a meeting, looked for a temporary valve with my counterpart of P-R-K and found some pipe we needed. I don't know how I could do a better job. Have you ever met the asshole?"

"The Cold Storage manager? No."

"He shows nothing but contempt for me."

"That's not good."

"No, it's not. Okay, I'll call you tomorrow," said Clay. "By the way, is it possible to talk to T.J.?"

"He's not here right now."

Of course not, idiot, he's above the Arctic Circle with me! "That's okay. I just wanted to say hello to him . . . . By the way, was the money transferred to my Swiss account?"

"Yes." Skip's voice sounded strained.

"Then this number you gave me is my account number, right?"

"Right."

"What's the name of the bank?"

"What?"

"The name of the bank."

Skip was silent.

"Skip?"

"Yes."

"Did you die?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"Just curious . . . . Is there a problem with my knowing where my own money is?"

More silence.

"Skip?"

"Yes, yes . . . . I'm looking it up."

A rivulet of sweat trickled down onto Clay's nose. *It would all come down to this conversation, Clayton baby. Careful what you say, Skippy, you turd.*

"Uhh . . . I can't find it just now, but I do know the name is in French. I'll find out before you call tomorrow."

"What city is it in?"

"Grenoble . . . . Now it comes to me. It's called *Banque du Grenoble*. You going to call them or something?"

"Call them?" Clay chuckled. "Why? Shouldn't I trust my own country?" He didn't wait for a response. "Okay, I guess that's all I got. You?"

"Nothing. Talk to you tomorrow."

Clay hung up and scrambled for the telephone directory.

The operator confirmed his suspicions about Skip's ignorance of European geography. "Grenoble is in France, Sir . . . not Switzerland."

A knock came to the door. Sure it was Alex, he rushed to answer. It was his supervisor.

Clay fell back in surprise. "Well, hello, Jim. What's going on?"

Jim was tall and lanky, about fifty. He had no personality as far as Clay was concerned. "I thought I would come by and talk to you a little." He walked past Clay and sat down, looking down at the uneaten salad. Pushing it away, he rested his elbow on the desk.

Clay felt trapped, realizing that the CIA would hear everything that was said. He couldn't give an excuse of having to leave for somewhere else, because T.J. would become suspicious when he didn't. He didn't want T.J. to know that he'd been in Deadhorse, looking for rebuilt valves. He left the door open and sat on the bed, his composure in disarray.

"I just want you to know that I don't necessarily have the same theories that the boss does about job performance. Personally, I think you're doing a great job. Because of the

sorry mess out there, it takes a coordinator who isn't afraid to get his hands dirty to dig up the material. I really like your style."

Clay was pleasantly surprised. "Thanks, Jim. That's really encouraging."

"By the way, I understand that you went into . . . "

"I meant to ask you, Jim," interrupted Clay. "What's the story on P-R-K's project manager?"

"What about him?" Jim looked confused.

"He's so young and arrogant. How did he get up to vice president in that company?"

Jim cocked his head. "Uhh . . . I guess because he's pretty much a go-getter. He's not that young . . . probably in his late thirties. So what were you looking for in . . . "

"Care for a drink?" Clay interrupted again. He wondered how he must sound to T.J., listening to every word from Deadhorse.

"I don't drink," Jim responded coolly.

"Mind if I have one?"

Jim shook his head, frowning as Clay poured himself another shot of Scotch. "Why were you looking for . . . "

Unable to think of anything else, he began twitching his left eye, mimicking a nervous disorder. He focused past Jim, as if looking through him.

Jim narrowed his eyes. "Uhh . . . guess I'll run on and get to bed early. I'll see you in the office tomorrow. You look like you need some rest too." He looked in disgust at the bottle of Scotch, then turned and left.

Clay shook his head in embarrassment, then caught himself. *You don't owe anybody anything. If he thinks you're nuts, then fuck him! If Alexei finds the diskette, we'll be out of here tomorrow anyway. God knows how, but . . .*

Alexei appeared in the doorway, causing Clay's pulse to quicken. The Russian looked both ways and entered the room, closing the door lightly and locking it. "Hi there, Clay. Mind if I come in for awhile?" he asked for the benefit of the CIA.

"Come on in, come on in, Alex." Clay hoped that he didn't sound too enthusiastic. He stood and reached out for the Russian, who held on to him lovingly. "I didn't know you lived in this camp." Clay held Alexei's face in his hands, staring at him, longing to kiss him.

"I don't," said Alexei. "I ate dinner here tonight because you guys were having lobster."

Clay laughed nervously. "Have a seat. Want a drink?"

"Yeah, sure." Trembling, Alexei strongly pulled Clay closer and kissed him deeply.

Clay sent his tongue exploring inside the fresh-tasting mouth. He glided it along the Russian's teeth, then deeply into the crevice between his jaw bone and cheeks. Alexei's cock pressed hotly against Clay's leg.

Alexei gently pushed him away. "Good Scotch." He methodically began searching for the diskette, silently opening drawers and feeling underneath them.

"Uhh . . . " Clay tried to think of something to say.

"I uhh . . . I appreciate your taking the time to help me look for that pipe," Alexei said, as if reading Clay's mind.

"Glad to help." Clay looked up at the ceiling, wondering where the bug was.

Alexei quietly opened the wardrobe closet, searching it thoroughly. "But I didn't come by to talk shop. I just thought I'd thank you and maybe watch a little television. I don't have one."

"Sure. Glad to have you," Clay said, admiring Alexei's strategy.

"What's on?"

"CNN."

"Great."

Clay watched in fascination as Alexei finished searching the closet, then went through the desk drawers. He went over the underside of the desk, looked for blemishes in the wallpaper, looked under the bed, checked the underside of the wastebasket. On his hands and knees, he prodded every inch of the carpeting. He climbed atop the chair and looked at the top of the wardrobe. He smiled and climbed down, gesturing for Clay to look. Clay climbed atop the chair and saw a small microphone atop the closet. Shaking his head, he climbed down and sat on the edge of the bed.

Alexei pulled a pad and pen out of his pocket and wrote: THE DISKETTE ISN'T HERE. I THINK I KNOW NOW WHERE IT IS.

Clay whispered, "Where?"

Alexei wrote: J PAD . . . . WE'LL LOOK FOR IT TOMORROW MORNING. CAN'T LOOK NOW. TOO RISKY. GET THERE BEFORE TEAMSTERS GET THERE, SAY 7 AM. DON'T TELL ANYONE WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

Clay nodded.

"Could we turn it up a little?" Alexei turned up the volume of the television set.

"Sure," said Clay, his eyes widening as Alexei began to undress.

Alexei bent over and whispered in Clay's ear: "Don't slurp."

Clay felt a muscle pull in his stomach as he struggled not to laugh.

On the floor, they made love quietly, tenderly. They climaxed silently, powerfully, then held each other for over an hour. At ten o'clock, Alexei reluctantly dressed.

"Oh, shit," exclaimed Clay. "I must have fallen asleep."

"Me too." Alexei sputtered trying to muffle a laugh. "Oh, fuck, it's after ten. Gotta go. See you tomorrow."

"See ya."

Alexei opened and closed the door, then grabbed Clay and kissed him once more, pulling him into a corner. "I love you, Clay," he whispered. "I hope I don't get you killed."

The words disturbed Clay. He felt a sensation akin to love but held back. "I sure hope you don't get me killed too," was all he could say.

Alexei silently left.

Fifteen minutes later, Clay slipped into the hallway and quickly made his way to the truck outside. The sun had just slipped below the horizon and the area was bathed in half-light. As he reached the narrow road to J Pad, he turned off his lights

and carefully scanned the horizon.

Reaching the pad, he hid his truck behind the module and made sure no one was following him. He watched as a set of car lights passed by the J-Pad turnoff, then pulled a flashlight from the glove compartment and slipped inside the module.

He concentrated on imagining Hovis' movements prior to his slaughter. He visualized Hovis and the Russian turncoat as they were forced inside at gunpoint. It seemed likely that Hovis would have leaned against the same crate that Clay had leaned against, so he sat on it and looked around. Seeing no way that a diskette could have been hidden away, he tried another crate and another. Clay reasoned that Hovis would've had to drop the diskette in order to get rid of it—not place it somewhere. That's when he saw the one inch crack in the floor.

Clay rushed to the crack and shined a light into it. Spotting the computer disk, his heart skipped a beat and he felt like he would reel. He took several deep breaths and concentrated on how to get the disk out of the crack. Rubbing his hand against the crate, he felt a splinter. Ripping it away, he pulled off another and probed for the diskette with a chopstick action.

Hearing the approaching sound of a truck, Clay turned off the flashlight and almost panicked. With fierce resolve, he shook his head and tried the splinters again. Firmly grabbing the diskette, he sighed and pulled upward, hissing obscenities at himself as it dropped. He tried it again, but dropped it when he flinched at the sound of a truck door slamming just outside. Mumbling more obscenities, he tried again and succeeded in pulling the diskette out of the crack.

Placing the diskette in his back pocket, he brazenly walked outside to confront the intruder.

Burt Perkins almost ran into Clay as he rounded the corner of the module. "Uh oh, caught in the act."

"The act of what?" asked Clay calmly.

"I thought you were one of the guys working on the shutdown with me."

"Shutdown?" said Clay. "I didn't know there was any shutdown work tonight."

"It's an emergency shutdown," responded Burt. "They got me out of bed. I know I shouldn't be here, but I need some material and didn't have the time to go through channels."

"What do you need? Maybe I can find it for you."

Burt stared at Clay, his expression stoic, with an undercurrent of . . . *what?*

A mask, thought Clay. *Is it amusement? He's almost smiling.*

"Gaskets," he said at length. "Three-sixteen stainless, twenty inch."

"No twenty inch here." Clay brazenly stared at Burt's crotch bulge.

Burt walked past him, glancing at Clay's front.

Is he looking at my pockets or my basket?

"Maybe we can make something else work," said Burt, walking past Clay and into the module.

Clay watched as Burt scanned the inside of the module with a flashlight of his own. Clay augmented Burt's beam with his.

Burt pointed at shelving on a far wall. "What's up there?"

"Mostly garbage—needle valves, a couple of banged-up globe valves. That's why this stuff isn't protected: it's all garbage."

Burt pulled a step ladder over to the shelving. "By the way, why are you here in the middle of the night?"

As Burt stepped up the ladder, Clay steadied it for him.

"Waiting for you to come along," said Clay, smiling broadly, watching as Burt's crotch appeared just over the top of the ladder.

Burt squinted. "Pardon?"

Clay climbed up the other side of the ladder and boldly unzipped Burt's jeans, shaking the ladder perilously as Burt unsuccessfully tried to step down to the floor.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Burt yelled. "Get your goddamned hands off me!" He frantically reached up and held on to the shelves to keep from falling eight feet to the floor.

Convinced that Burt was trapped, Clay reached inside his jeans and pulled out a short, fat, circumcised cock. He sucked it deftly, fearlessly, rattling the ladder each time Burt tried to step down.

Burt began to cry in embarrassment and rage. "You filthy cocksucker! I'll kill you, you . . . slime!"

Clay tightly embraced Burt's thighs and sucked lovingly, becoming elated as Burt's cock responded with an erection.

Soon, Burt grew silent and held himself up with one hand instead of two. His other hand absently urged a deeper plunge of Clay's mouth. He began to breathe heavily. His legs became wobbly.

Clay buried his face into Burt's crotch and took the liquid prize, relishing it, acknowledging his addiction to it.

As Clay sat in the truck, fondling the diskette, he watched as the CIA agent finally left the module. His mouth agape, Burt glanced uncomfortably at Clay and got into his truck.

Clay started the engine and drove back to the camp, leaving Burt behind.

NINE

The Following Morning

Having slept only three hours off and on, Clay awakened to the sound of his alarm. He felt awful; his head ached and his back rippled with spasms. During his waking moments, he drifted from anxious thoughts concerning Alexei's veracity to sweet, erotic fantasies, featuring the Russian and himself. During his brief episodes of sleep, he dreamt that he and Alexei were being relentlessly chased around the globe.

He drove to work at six-thirty and, as required, placed his truck keys on a board in the foyer so that others could use it in an emergency. Jim, his supervisor, strode past him and tore the keys off the board, walking into his office. "I'd like a word with you, Clay."

Clay frowned at the keys on Jim's desk as he sat down. "What's the problem?"

Jim never looked at him as he picked up the telephone and dialed a four digit number. "Hello, this is Jim Everhardt at Cold Storage. I have a man here I'd like tested for a full panel—especially cocaine. His name is Pascal . . . Clay Pascal."

Clay wanted to kill the man and stared at him hatefully.

"Ten? That'll be fine. We'll have him there." He hung up, looking very pleased with himself. Still not meeting Clay's eyes, he said, "Standard routine for someone who acts strangely, Clay. No offense. In the meantime, you'll have to stay in your office until security escorts you to the drug testing lab at ten." He finally looked at Clay, whose expression intimidated him, causing him to quickly look away. "If you're positive, you'll be escorted to the airport. If not, then you have my apology and you'll get your truck back."

"Is that all?" asked Clay, his voice deep, dry, hot.

"That's all," Jim said, his pleased look dissipating.

Clay made his way to the office he shared with Tom Gruber. He sat stiffly in his chair, staring out at a cold, drizzling rain that had just begun to fall.

Tom turned and looked at him. "Oh, Jim was looking for you."

"He found me." Clay continued staring out the window, his mind frantically searching for alternates. He looked at his watch, which indicated that it was 6:45. "Tom, can I borrow your truck for a couple of minutes?"

Tom appeared suspicious. "What happened to yours?"

"I pulled up out front and the goddamned thing died on me." Clay stood, anxiously reaching for Tom's keys.

"I have to go to a meeting in fifteen minutes." He turned and continued reading a report. "Sorry."

Clay stormed out and asked to use the trucks of two other coordinators, but each said that they were about to leave for other locations. He walked to the Teamster area and asked around with no success. He began to wonder if the word was out on him.

Through the double doors between the materials management office and Teamster areas, Clay saw that Jim was looking for him. He turned and rushed out of the Teamster exit and around to the main entrance where the keys were. He grabbed the keys to Jim's truck and sped off to J Pad.

From two miles out, he could see that there were no vehicles on the pad. He looked at his watch, which told him that he was exactly on time. Reaching the pad, he parked Jim's truck behind the module, trying to hide it from the main road. He climbed atop a platform to scan for Alexei's truck, seeing instead a security truck with blue lights flashing. And then it occurred to him that Alexei could have been discovered and arrested. *And now it's over*, he thought, watching the security truck as it sped toward him.

The guard stopped his truck up at the Deadhorse Airport entrance. He turned and nodded. "Thanks for the television. Sorry you got your ass in a sling."

Clay smiled. "Oh, I'm not. I didn't really like it here anyway." He crawled out of the truck and picked up his suitcase from the back of the truck. Scanning the surroundings, he walked into the airport and saw that the next flight to Anchorage was over two hours away. He sat in the waiting area with the whole room in his view.

He considered hiding the diskette and bargaining for his freedom with it, but knew that he was just not crafty enough to deal with the CIA. He opted for seeing if he could get out of Prudhoe Bay alive, just by quietly leaving on the next flight. *After all, surely they wouldn't try to kill me in the airport or worse, inside the airplane. Why would they want to kill me anyway? Who the fuck would believe me even if I did try to tell the story? The media would laugh at me.*

Several minutes later, the lobby filled with passengers for flights to Point Barrow and Fairbanks. Clay looked for T.J. but didn't see him. Suddenly, he sensed an intense stare and poured over the crowd again. He saw a man sitting opposite him, holding a newspaper up in front of his face. The hands were wide with thick, hairy fingers—familiar. Clay shifted slightly, trying to see the man's face. Then the paper slowly moved, exposing Alexei's face, altered with a fake moustache and dark brown hair.

Clay suppressed the urge to show his joy. He dropped his eyes instead, collecting his composure.

The Russian slowly shook his head, then rolled his eyes into the direction of a row of seats to Clay's left.

Pretending to yawn, Clay slowly panned in that direction, finally gazing at a dark, wiry man who looked vaguely familiar. Clay pretended not to recognize him, yawning again, glancing at Alexei for further instructions.

Alexei rolled his eyes into the direction of the runway and slowly got to his feet, picking up a suitcase. He casually walked in front of the CIA agent and out the main entrance. Clay waited until it became evident where Alexei was headed, then slowly got up with his suitcase in hand. He walked toward the men's room near the entrance. Behind the CIA agent, Clay looked back at him and watched as the man's head turned to keep his quarry within peripheral vision. On a hunch, Clay walked into the men's room, then immediately out, finding that the agent had strode for a phone booth, unaware that he'd been fooled.

Clay quickly followed Alexei to an apron to the north of the airport terminal. He turned and examined the surroundings. Recognizing the machine shop where he'd seen T.J., he realized that he was probably in someone's sights. *Binoculars or a rifle?* He shuddered.

He watched as Alexei climbed into a twin engine airplane, outfitted with both wheels and pontoons. Without waiting for Clay to get inside, Alexei started one engine, then the other. Clay scrambled around the turbulence and quickly climbed into the airplane.

"Fancy meeting you here," said Alexei almost casually, peeling off a fake moustache. "Hang on, babe, this will probably be one hell of a ride." He spoke into his radio. "N-seven-four-eight-zero-three-three-J-D, requesting take off instructions." He turned to Clay. "The whole Slope knows you were kicked off."

"You said seven o'clock." Clay watched as T.J. ran toward them two blocks away. Even at that distance, it was obvious that he was screaming obscenities. "Here they come."

"Take off to the south, N-seven-four-eight-zero-three-three-J-D. Keep your eyes open for Alaska 390 bypassing the storm. Clear the corridor as soon as you're at five hundred. You're cleared for takeoff to Barrow," said the controller.

Clay looked toward the mountains to the south and saw the dark clouds. "Barrow?"

Alexei pulled out the throttle and sped to the north end of the single runway. He watched as T.J., Burt and the wiry man ran for a twin engine jet aircraft, then pulled the throttle all the way out, powering the aircraft down the runway and finally into the sky, headed for the Brooks Range a hundred miles away. "Looks like your CIA buddies didn't buy our business relationship. One of them followed me on my way out to J Pad this morning. Had I met you there, they would have closed in. I drove back to the camp and rummaged through my little bag of tricks. After putting on a moustache and dying my hair, I borrowed another pickup and started tailing you."

"I thought you'd found the disk and run out on me." Clay studied him for a reaction.

Alexei shook his head somberly. "I don't blame you for thinking that." He sighed deeply. "After I thought about it more, I realized there was no way it could be at J Pad. It's all your fault, you know."

Clay frowned. "My fault?"

"Sure. Had I not been so hot to get you in bed, I would've looked harder for it." He looked at Clay playfully, but his expression quickly soured. "It *had* to be in your room."

"N-seven-four-eight-zero-three-three-J-D, this is Prudhoe Bay. You're off course . . . over."

Alexei turned off the radio. "We don't have shit. Nothing to sell . . . a slim-to-none chance at getting away from that jet that's probably taking off just about now."

"It would have been so easy, Alexei. You could've said that the CIA made your cover. You could've gone back to Moscow in one piece."

"I meant what I said," Alexei said, reacting to Clay's playfulness.

"Oh, how I know that." Clay patted him on the leg and turned to look behind. The jet was still on the ground. "We're going to make it, Alexei. We're going to beat them." He pulled the diskette from his pocket, holding it up to the Russian's face.

Alexei's eyes widened; speechless, his jaw dropped. Finally, his lips spread in a wide grin. "Where . . . ?"

"J Pad. Hovis dropped it into a crack in the floor."

"How the hell did you think of that?" Alexei frowned. "When?"

"After you left, I drove out there. I even got caught by one of them, but I . . . uhh . . . compromised him."

"Compromised him?"

Clay decided to be perfectly honest up front. "I sucked his cock." He watched as a ripple of jealously came across Alexei's face. "Now tell me that I wouldn't make a good spy."

Alexei studied him, as if trying to decipher just who he really was.

"Since my experience with T.J. in Houston, I seem to've become addicted to cock."

Alexei chuckled briefly, then realized that Clay was serious.

"I'm not talking *may-I-suck-your-cock-sir* stuff. I'm talking *gimme-your-dick-dude!* I've turned into a voracious animal. It's like I was a vampire or something."

Alexei sighed. "So *that's* why you get uncomfortable when I tell you I love you." He looked at Clay for confirmation.

Clay nodded.

"Just take it a step at a time," said Alexei softly, assuringly. "You're feeding below the belt. You have to learn how to feed up here." He pointed at his chest. " . . . and here." He pointed at his head. He squeezed Clay's knee. "You know something? No one can beat us. You know that? No one." He pointed at an enclosure near Clay's elbow. "Take out that map and tell me the elevation of the tallest mountain on the line between Prudhoe Bay and Fairbanks"

Clay opened the map and looked it over. "Uhh . . . looks like . . . oh, here . . . eight thousand meters. Or is it feet?"

"Feet. Okay, keep your eye on the altimeter." Alexei touched it. "Yell if we get below nine thousand. I'm gonna have my hands full with the storm up there." He looked to his left and saw the Alaska Airlines flight from Fairbanks, positioning for a descent into Prudhoe Bay after having gone around the storm. "We would have smacked into him, had he been going his regular course." He smiled. "Just throwing another obstacle at your friend T.J."

Clay looked behind them but couldn't see the CIA jet. "What will they do when they catch up?"

"Nothing much." Alexei looked back too. "They most certainly think we have the diskette and sure as hell won't risk losing it now. "No, they'll just try to stay with us and see where we land. Normally, it would be easy for them, but they're up against Cheetah and his new sidekick now."

Clay felt a childish sense of pride. He likened the feeling to that of how Robin must have felt around Batman. "We can land on water, right?"

Alexei nodded. "I planned this for days. Of course, I had no idea that I would have company." He winked. "Also, I didn't expect to be chased by a jet. I didn't plan on a snow storm either, but that will ultimately work to our advantage unless I slam this sucker into a mountain peak."

Looming ahead were the mountains, now being enshrouded by menacing, dark clouds.

Clay looked back again and saw the outline of a plane following them. "I think they're behind us."

Alexei looked back and nodded. "Yep, that's them all right."

Four minutes later, the jet aircraft streaked by them, ostensibly trying to intimidate. Both Alexei and Clay brashly offered their middle fingers in a salute. They watched as the jet turned at the base of the mountains and came straight at them.

Clay felt the effects of excessive adrenaline streaking for and attacking the receptors in his heart walls, signaling impending violent death. At seemingly unfathomable speed, the jet bore on them, banking away at the final seconds, tossing the small plane around in its wake. Sensing that his brain was

being deprived of oxygen, Clay took several deep breaths and checked on Alexei, who pondered the mountains with unswerving determination.

Alexei winced as he saw Clay's expression.

"Wha . . . what's the matter?" Clay asked, his voice gaunt with terror.

"You're as white as a sheet. That's what's the matter." He pulled Clay toward him, biting his ear lightly. "Trust me. They won't make us crash. They're just trying to get us to turn around and give up."

Clay took more deep breaths and tried to appear calm.

"They know we won't, but they're angry and frustrated. It's just chest-beating."

Clay looked back and saw that the jet was circling around them, keeping them in sight.

"Just past that eight thousand foot peak is a slope which goes down to a town called Chandalar. There's a big lake there which feeds into the Chandalar River, which in turn feeds into the Yukon River. West of the big lake is a series of smaller lakes and one of them has a cabin on it. I checked the area out, so I know that the cabin hasn't been occupied for some time now. It's nestled away in the trees and can't be seen too well from the air. I think we can land on the lake and sink the plane. If we're lucky, the CIA and KGB will think that we crashed somewhere and eventually forget about us."

"You mean we're going to hide out in the cabin for the whole winter?" The thought gave him a chill. "I don't have any cold weather gear and it gets down to fifty below around here."

"I know," Alexei said impatiently. "We'll rough it. I know how to live off the land. It'll be our sanctum."

"Sanctum? Isn't that part of a mass?"

"You're thinking abo*ut Sanctus*. Sanctum means a sacred or private place—sort of like a sanctuary . . . a place for refuge."

Clay considered the prospect of being snowed in with Alexei for several months. "Jesus, are we going to fuck each other's brains out."

Alexei grinned, then watched as the jet made one more pass. Again, they gave the middle finger salute as the jet roared by.

Soon they were in the clouds and the plane lurched and tossed in the turbulence. Clay kept his eyes locked on the altimeter. Within minutes, they were in complete darkness, their faces eerily illuminated by the lights from the controls. Clay felt like they'd been swallowed whole by some leviathan .

It seemed like hours, but it was slightly less than half an hour when they broke out of the clouds and saw the slope leading to the Yukon River basin, which was covered by lower clouds. Alexei dropped the plane to an altitude of less than 5,000 feet, slipping underneath the cloud cover, finally locating the small lake. Searching the skies and finding no sign of the jet, Alexei made a pass over the lake. The cabin, nestled into a small canyon near the lake, appeared empty; there seemed to be no one within miles of it. Circling for another pass, both men carefully scanned the skies, then Alexei committed to the landing, which was smooth.

Pulling the plane up to a seaplane dock not far from the cabin, Clay jumped out and secured the aircraft with a weathered rope attached to a stanchion. He scanned the area, which was ablaze with the brilliant yellow of birch tree foliage.

While Clay waited on the dock, Alexei broke the padlock on the cabin door and looked inside. Satisfied, he rushed to the dock. Reaching inside the plane, Alexei found and inflated a rubber raft, attaching it to a pontoon. He reached further inside the plane and pulled out a parka, insulated pants and heavy gloves, throwing them on the dock. Fetching a .357 Magnum pistol out of his suitcase on the dock, he jumped back inside the plane. After moving the aircraft to the center of the lake, he got into the raft and paddled clear of it, firing into the pontoons with the powerful pistol, watching as the airplane slowly sank in over one hundred feet of water.

As he pulled the raft out of the water and placed it underneath the cabin, he heard the distant sound of jet engines. Clay grabbed everything from the dock and ran after Alexei into the cabin. After the jet failed to make a second pass, they consoled one another.

"The trees don't hide the cabin," said Clay.

"No big deal. There're all sorts of cabins in this valley. Besides, they're looking for the plane, not a cabin," reasoned Alexei.

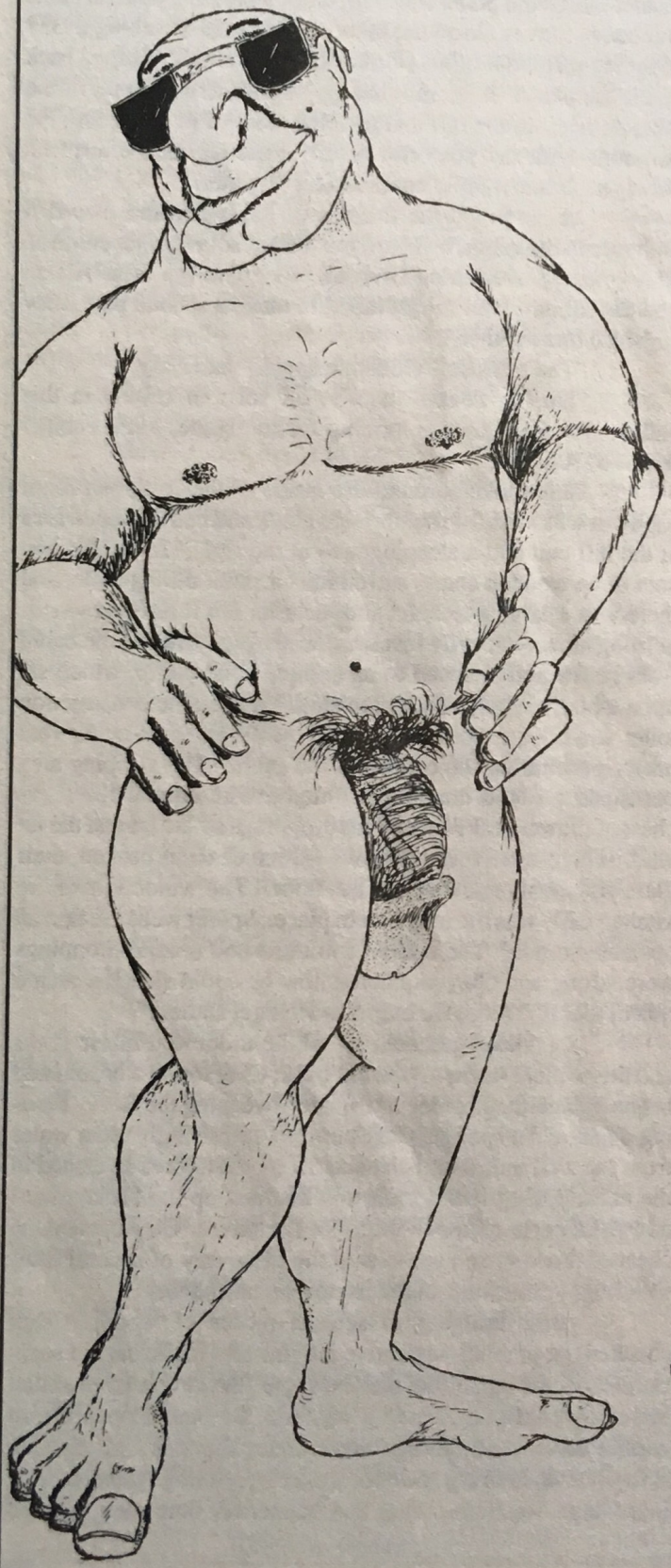
Clay looked around the inside of the cold, one room cabin. It was made of prefabricated logs and had a kitchen area at the left end and a sleeping area at the right. In the kitchen area three wooden chairs surrounded a small dining table, and there was a large porcelain sink near an old fashioned wood-burning stove. Heavily insulated water pipe entered the cabin from below and attached to an antique hand pump, which sat upon a platform adjacent to the sink. A portable construction toilet straddled a hole in the floor at the far corner, its vent neatly penetrating the ceiling of the cabin. The sleeping area contained a rotted double bed littered with animal feces. A chest of drawers caked with bird droppings stood against the far wall. There were four windows—three of them broken, their glass fragments strewn over the floor. The window over the kitchen table was the only one in place. Spider webs created an obstacle course. The odors of mildew and animal droppings were strong and Clay wondered how he could sleep in such a rancid place. "Well, we might as well get started."

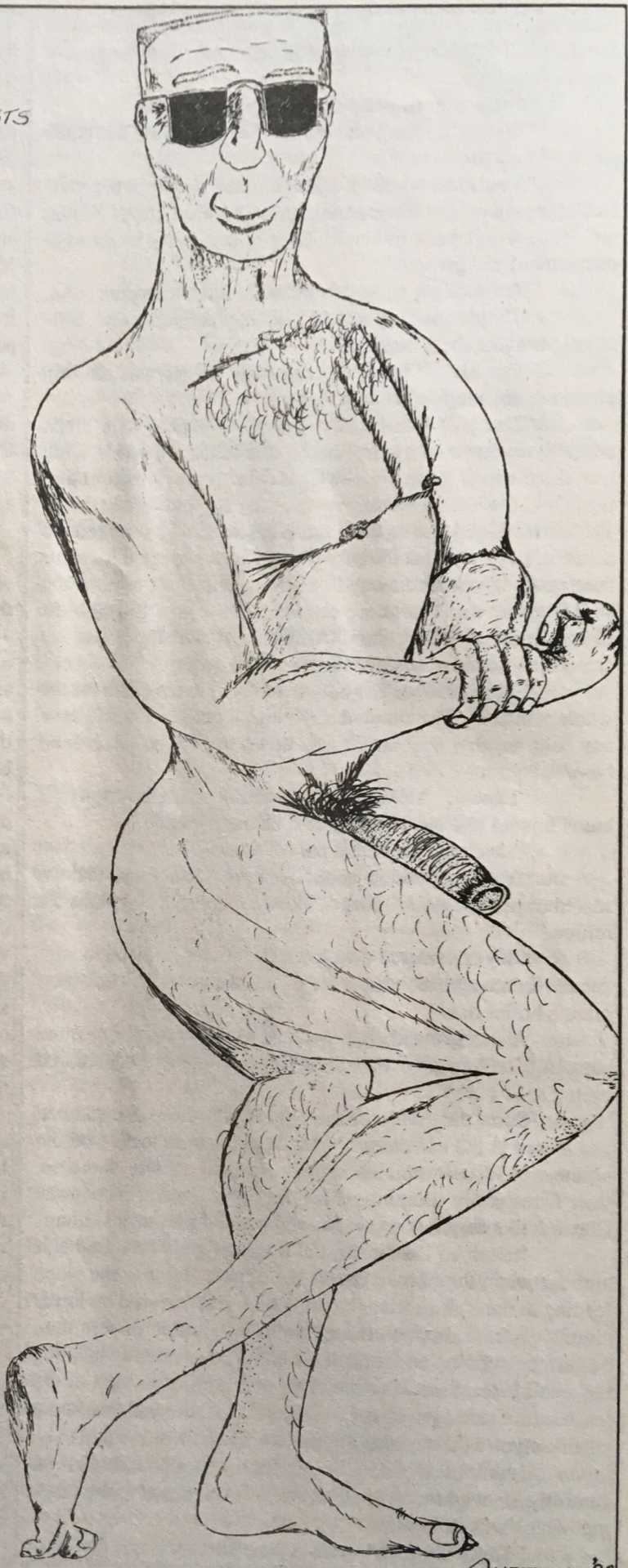
As Alexei gathered up all the mildewed fabric items and threw them into a ravine out back, Clay found a broom and began dismantling spider webs, later sweeping the floor. Finding a pail and a sponge, Clay pumped surprisingly clear water from the well below and cleaned off the furniture. In a shed in the back, Alexei found tools and boarded up the broken windows. Later, he chopped wood for the stoves. Clay opened the chest of drawers and celebrated the discovery of several foul-smelling, yet useable, blankets, towels and sheets.

After bringing in several pieces of wood, Alexei checked out the shelving above the sink and found bars of soap, dishwashing soap, a few dishes, some flatware, a large skillet and a covered pot. Finding no food, he pulled open a torn curtain covering a storage nook under the sink. A raccoon screeched and ran out the door in terror, sending Alexei reeling into Clay. Realizing what had happened, both men laughed

[Continued on page 52]

AFTER THEIR WORKOUT, GUS AND NED STRUCK A SERIES OF POSES FOR THE PLEASURE OF THE TOURISTS CROWDING THE STRAND...





QUETZAL '88

QUETZAL has been with us from the very beginning and has contributed a massive amount of cartoons to the cause. He and his handsome model/actor lover, PLOVER, reside in West Hollywood.

heartily. They hugged each other and held on tightly.

"Any regrets?" Alexei asked softly.

"Only one. I only regret that I didn't meet you about ten years sooner."

Alexei kissed him. "If we don't find some food soon, you'll start to hate me for getting you into this.

Clay kissed him back. "I've always heard that you're supposed to store food outside because of marauding animals."

Alexei raised his index finger. "Good point. Shall we?"

"Let's." Clay led the way outside.

They searched under the cabin and inside the shed where Alexei had found the axe. There was no canned or dried food anywhere.

Alexei looked up at the darkening sky. "No more midnight sun. Pretty soon, it'll stay dark all the time and the snows'll come"

Clay sat down on the ground. "It amazes the shit out of me how you developed an American accent."

"You perhaps *vant me to talk like Rooshian?"* Alexei said something rapidly in Russian.

Clay shook his head, enchanted. "What did you say?"

"That I want to fuck the living hell out of you tonight."

"Seriously, how did you learn so quickly?"

Alexei sat next to him. "Training. I've studied English for over twenty years. I've learned to speak in a Texas dialect or a Midwest dialect or a New England . . . "

"So what is this dialect?"

"This is natural, Americanized Alexei Volodin."

Clay leaned back, studying him with fascination. "I've never met a man quite like you." He hesitated. "How can I say this? I . . . I feel so insignificant around you sometimes. I'm sort of awed by you, I guess." He chuckled and rolled up his eyes. "Here I am having an affair with a KGB agent . . ."

"Ex-KGB agent," Alexei corrected.

Clay looked at the Russian thoughtfully, finally lowering his eyes, feeling reluctant about discussing the sexual "beast" within him. "I'm also awed by what's happened to me in such a short period of time." He reflected on the past few days. "I'm an expert cocksucker, a man without a country . . . . Would you believe that three weeks ago I was eighty-five percent straight, minding my own business in Houston, sleeping with a beautiful girl every night? Holy shit, I must have been ripe for a big change. It's . . . it's like I'm addicted to . . . to . . . *having* men. I'm like a kid with a new toy . . . no . . . *wo*rse. Worse than that. I've turned into a satyr."

"Don't sweat it," assured Alexei. "It's normal for a man to go berserk when he comes out late in life. This guy in Seattle—tough guy, built like you. He'd never had sex with another man. I seduced him and, after all the guilt subsided, he came back for more. One night, he came five times, and all the time, he was cursing me for 'corrupting' him. Next thing you know, I began to run into him in all the cruisy places. He couldn't suck enough cock."

"What happened to him?" asked Clay, eager to know his own prognosis.

"It all evened out. He finally met an older guy in Vancouver and settled down. I don't think you have to worry about it." Alexei's eyes turned misty. "Maybe you'll fall in love with me and settle down." Alexei seemed to regret the statement and shook his head. "Don't read too much into it. People change. Perhaps you should feel lucky that you were able to change. Some people never allow themselves to change, so they stagnate and die young."

"I'd like to say that yours was the first I ever had in my mouth, but it wasn't. As you already know, T.J. talked me into it—said that I wouldn't be effective against you unless I got over that *barrier*. Next thing you know, I went down on my roommate at the camp in his sleep, followed by this . . . this blur of dicks. Don't get me wrong, now. I don't feel any self-loathing over this . . . no guilt at all. Even when I was living with Michelle, I knew that I'd suck some man's cock someday. But I wanted it to be a man I loved."

"Don't feel bad. I got started back when I was thirteen."

Clay lay back on the damp ground, looking up through the pine trees. "Maybe it's because it was T.J. I wish I could void that—somehow reverse the experience in light of his cutting my throat." His eyes slowly focused on something up in the trees, causing him to jump to his feet. "What is that?"

Alexei squinted up in the growing darkness, finally spotting the bulging net hanging from a high limb. He followed the rope attached to the top of the netting down to the side of the tree. Reaching up to where the rope was tied to a spike in the tree, he unfastened it and slowly lowered the net down to the ground. Inside were enough beans, coffee, flour, oil, freeze dried foods and salted meats to get them through the winter.

"Our luck just changed." Clay laughed and hugged the Russian. "This means that we'll be able to hold up here this winter."

Alexei looked around the area with a worried look. "It also means that the owner is probably due back."

"I wonder if anything else is stashed around here?"

"Probably," said Alexei. "If he's a trapper, he's probably got all kinds of things buried around here. And speaking of buried . . . give me our wild card."

Clay handed him the diskette.

"Let's find a glass jar and bury this. It just might buy us out of a jam."

TEN

Two Weeks Later

The heavy snows came early; temperatures plummeted, bringing a thin sheet of ice to the shallows of the lake. Eventually, Clay was forced to continuously break a thin sheet of ice in order to fish for the huge lake trout from the pier. With just a tin can, a hook, a piece of leftover food and a twenty-foot piece of string, he'd managed to supply more fish than both of them could eat, storing the gutted and scaled fillets between layers of snow inside a covered barrel on the front porch. Now that the weather had turned colder, Clay was determined to catch and freeze enough fish to get them through the winter.

While Clay did his part by fishing, Alexei crafted and

set out traps made of branches and chord. Hoping to snare enough Arctic hare to fashion Arctic clothing and supplement the meat supply, Alexei placed the traps as far away as five miles, keeping him prowling through the woods for hours at a time. Usually returning by late afternoon with an assortment of game—mostly hare—he and Clay consistently worked into the night, processing the meat and skins. The pelts were dried out and softened by rubbing the skin sides with smooth rocks. The meat was gutted and packed in snow inside a potato sack, which was hung from a tree like the provisions they'd found earlier. Alexei had processed enough furs to make a cozy sleeping bag for two, and when he wasn't fishing, Clay busied himself with sewing together a hodgepodge of animal skins for a rug.

Clay sat at the end of the pier, pulling in the twenty-seventh large fish of the day, his hands growing numb with cold. Wearing only an insulated jacket, jeans and a ball cap, he became aware of the fact that he was risking frostbite. He looked down at his thin gloves, which had become wet and rancid with the odor of fish. "That's enough for today," he said, looking around for Alexei, concerned that he'd not returned. He glanced toward the mountains and saw that dusk was no more than an hour away. Since Alexei had been dressed in the Arctic gear and heavy boots, Clay shrugged, confident that the Russian could take care of himself.

As he walked toward the cabin with the large pail of fish, he heard the sound of a distant airplane. Slipping and almost falling, he scurried toward a massive rock nearby and looked up to see if smoke were pouring out of the chimney. To his relief, there was little smoke and it was white, barely distinguishable against a backdrop of snow on the cabin's roof. Safely out of sight, he looked up as a twin engine hydroplane passed low over the lake.

Sure that it was T.J. and his men, armed to the teeth, Clay stood transfixed as the plane banked and swooped down to the lake, heading straight for the cabin. Excitement raging through his body, he hid the fish behind the rock and backed out of sight of the plane, finally running to a rise behind the cabin. Climbing to a vantage point overlooking the cabin and the approaching hydroplane, he hid between two snow-covered boulders and watched as the plane stopped fifty feet from the pier.

A lone man—not T.J.—opened the pilot door and threw an anchor into the lake, then inflated a rubber dingy and lowered it into the water. He appeared to be huge and was dressed in a parka and Arctic coveralls like those worn on the Slope. He stepped out onto the pontoon and stared at the cabin as smoke wafted over the roof. Finally he reached inside for a rifle and an oar. With his eyes locked on the cabin, he gently lowered himself into the dingy and rowed to the pier. The man's gaze seemed to move toward the ridge, forcing Clay to quickly dodge, burying his face in the snow and losing his footing.

Clay felt himself sliding and frantically reached out for something to halt his movement. Grabbing a shrub, he held on as a small wall of snow silently continued past him, exposing precarious patches of ice underneath. Anxiously lifting himself up again, he peered over the ridge and saw the dingy atop the pier. He looked for the man around the house, but he was nowhere in sight.

Clay pondered the possibilities. He shuddered as he imagined Alexei coming from the woods, oblivious of the hydroplane, getting cut down by the aircraft's owner, who obviously owned the cabin too. *No. Surely Alexei would've heard the plane. Surely he'd see the plane and exercise caution. God, I have to stay up here so I'll see him coming and warn him., just in case.* He wiped snow off a ledge and sat, staring down at the cabin. His hands became increasingly numb and his feet followed suit.

Darkness came and, with it, bone-chilling cold. Clay began to feel giddy and lost feeling in his hands. Knowing that he would be dead in another thirty minutes, he slid down the ridge and staggered to the front of the cabin. "Don't shoot!" yelled Clay, his lips numb. He listened for a reply, peering through the window at a faint light from a kerosene lamp. "Don't shoot," he repeated, feeling faint. He opened the door and collapsed on the floor. There was the image of a huge, grey-headed man holding a rifle on him, fading, fading.

Fade to black. Don't shoot, big guy. Fade to . . . .

Clay regained consciousness while lying face down on the rug in front of the stove. His hands and feet were wrapped in tepid, wet towels. His lips, ears, forehead and nose were burning. He blinked at the image of the big man, sitting near the stove, resting a rifle on his knee. Clay lifted his head to get a better look.

"Lie still," the heavy man softly ordered.

Clay studied him with one eye. "Thanks for helping me."

"Who are you and why did you move into my house?" The man leaned back in his chair, coolly waiting for his answer.

Clay very carefully considered his answer. "I . . . I crashed my plane in the lake . . . engine trouble . . . "

"Coming from where?"

"Prudhoe Bay."

"You're lying." The man aimed the rifle at Clay's head.

"Easy, man . . . easy . . . " Clay fought to breathe, forcing himself to inhale deeply, slowly. "I got off course . . . "

"What's stall speed for a plane like that out there?" The man aimed the rifle and stood, agitated.

"No! Don't shoot!" Clay closed his eyes. "Okay, I'm not a pilot. We're running from the police." He felt a draft wafting over him and saw that the door had cracked open.

"We?" The man stepped closer, holding the rifle out with one hand, the muzzle behind Clay's ear.

"That's right," said Alexei, from the front porch, his Magnum pointing through the partially opened door. "We."

The big man slowly turned and lowered the rifle. Clay looked up at Alexei, half angry, half elated.

The door opened all the way and Alexei slowly entered, gently closing it behind him. "Very slowly . . . kneel and place the rifle on the floor, then lie face down over here." Alexei pointed at a cloth rug in front of the door.

The big man knelt and placed the rifle on the floor, staring forlornly at Clay. He had short, white hair with bushy

white eyebrows. His eyes were dark blue and projected the fear of impending death. He slowly stood up, exposing the girth of his 6'-4", 300-pound frame. He raised his thick arms, his trembling hands splayed to immense dimensions. "I saved your friend here from frostbite," he said, walking toward Alexei. "Surely that's worth something."

Clay lifted himself up and rubbed his burning hands against his shirt.

Alexei pointed at the floor impatiently and looked with concern at Clay. "I have no intention of hurting you, mister, provided you don't try any heroics."

The man sighed and lay face down in front of Alexei. "Look, I don't have much money. I work up on the Slope and stay here during R and R. The plane and this cabin are all I got."

Alexei walked to Clay, holding the Magnum on the big man. "Are they frostbitten?"

Clay attempted to stand, then sat again as he felt dizzy. "I . . . I don't think so."

"Stay down and keep your hands in the towels," ordered Alexei, watching Clay do as he said. "I'll heat more water." His eyes still on the big man, he re-covered Clay's feet with the towels, then went to his bag and pulled out a first aid kit. Finding a roll of tape, he knelt and taped the big man's hands together behind his back. "Get up."

The man turned to a sitting position and struggled to rise. Alexei helped him up and pointed at the chair he was sitting in before. The man sat down as Alexei guided his arms over the back of the chair. The Russian looked around the room, glancing with concern at Clay, who watched him dully. Finally he took off his belt and tied the big man's feet to the chair.

"How's the water temperature?" Alexei felt the towels. "They need to be warmer." Tenderly, he kissed Clay on the lips, then went to the kitchen stove, where water was heating in a large pot.

Clay smiled weakly and studied the look of surprise on the big prisoner's face. Suddenly, Clay felt sorry for him.

Alexei dipped a pan into the hot water, filling it halfway. Adding cold water from the pump, he tested the temperature and carried the pan to Clay. Slowly he poured the warm water over both towels. "Just stay in that position for a while." He took off his parka and insulated pants, throwing them into a corner. Watching the white haired man, he took off his insulated boots and rubbed his face wearily.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked the big man softly, fearfully.

"Feed you, watch you sleep . . . watch you shit and piss. We're going to live with you for the entire winter." Alexei leaned back in his chair. "Then when spring comes, we're going to get out of your hair and, if we can swing it, pay you for your trouble."

Thinking that Alexei would kill the man, Clay looked up in relieved surprise, wondering what the man was thinking.

The big man seemed confused; his eyes darted back and forth from Alexei's feet to Clay's face, seemingly trying to determine what he was up against. "I have to get back to work in three weeks . . . I . . . "

"As the ice creeps further out, we'll move your hydroplane on top of the ice further in and camouflage it with that netting you stored underneath the cabin.."

"They'll be looking for me . . . "

Alexei laughed. "Hell, man, *everyone*'s looking for *us*." He got up and walked into the kitchen. "Well, I guess I'd better start making some dinner." He looked back at his incapacitated house mates. "No, thanks, I can fix it myself," he said, laughing at his own joke.

Alexei fried rabbit and served it with freeze dried apples, trail mix, instant potatoes and home-made bread. Clay offered to feed the big man, but he declined food, preferring to look out the window.

After dinner, Alexei paddled out to the airplane and brought back rope, a .38 revolver, a hunting knife, four cases of canned goods, lamp kerosene, two dozen eggs, frozen lobster and three half-gallon bottles of Canadian whiskey.

At bedtime, Alexei pulled the pelt rug toward the kitchen and offered it to the man for sleeping. At first he declined, opting to sit in the chair all night, but later changed his mind. Alexei tied the man's feet together with the rope and tied the other end to the bottom of the kitchen stove.

Placing the man's coat over him, Clay said, "Good night."

The big man stared up at the ceiling.

ELEVEN

The Following Morning

Convinced that a heavy snowstorm was on the horizon and that Clay was almost back to normal, Alexei stuffed a can of Spam and a bag of nuts inside his parka and rushed out into the woods to collect the bounty of his traps. Checking the bounds on the big man's feet and hands, Clay placed the .38 inside his belt and hid the hunting knife and rifle outside, just in case. After shaving and brushing his teeth, he prepared fried eggs, canned ham, canned potatoes, homemade bread and coffee for breakfast, feeding the big man like he would a baby. Deeply depressed, the man ate little and said nothing.

"I guess I'd feel the same," said Clay, hungrily finishing his breakfast.

The man looked at him, then down at the floor.

"Why don't you tell me your name and maybe we can personalize this a little bit."

The man sighed. "Tiny," he said softly, absently.

Clay's eyes widened as the humor hit him. He stifled a laugh, frantically chasing down a mouthful of food with coffee. "Tiny?" Clay struggled to wipe his face of a smile.

Tiny looked at him, then turned away in despair. "That's what everyone calls me. If I told you my real name, you'd get a bigger laugh out of it."

"I'm sorry." Clay was sincere. "It caught me off guard. You're too mean-looking to laugh at anyway."

Tiny studied him, his expression less forlorned and hateful. "I have to take a leak."

Clay got up and fetched a jar from the toilet enclosure as Tiny stood up. He kneeled in front of Tiny, wary of a sudden

kick. "I wondered when your bladder would give out."

Tiny registered disgust. "Can't we do this some other way?"

Clay shook his head and unzipped the man's pants. "And give you the freedom to bash my brains out? I don't think so." Reaching inside, Clay felt a lump of flesh and pulled out a short, flaccid penis with an abundance of foreskin. It was wet with perspiration and had the fragrance of a man needing a shower after working hard for twelve hours. Clay held the jar under the big man's cock.

Tiny struggled to urinate. "Aw come on, man. Let me walk to the john and piss with some dignity."

Embarrassed, Clay untied the belt and allowed Tiny to walk to the enclosure and urinate. Fearing the fury of powerful legs and huge feet, he pulled the revolver out of his belt and placed it atop the table away from Tiny's chair. "Might as well take a crap while you're back there," he called to the big man.

After urinating, Tiny returned to the chair. "I'm constipated, thanks to you and your friend." He glared at Clay. "Besides, I'm used to being able to wipe my own ass."

Clay again tied Tiny's feet with the belt, returning the .38 to his own belt. He poured another two cups of coffee. "I'll wipe your ass for you."

"Yeah, sure." Tiny's expression turned derisive. "You'd love to plug me, wouldn't you?"

"Pardon?"

"I saw him kiss you last night." The derision intensified. "I saw you suck his dick. You guys are queer as three dollar bills."

Clay became acutely incensed and leaned forward. "Hey, asshole." He felt his anger quickly surging. "We have absolutely nothing to lose . . . . You got that? *Nothing.*"

Tiny's eyes widened as he fathomed the danger in Clay's voice.

"For two cents, I'd blow your goddamned brains out." Clay pulled the gun out and held it against Tiny's chin. "It would be so much easier, you see. If I didn't have to be here with you right now . . . *baby-sitting* with you . . . I'd be out there, learning how to trap rabbits and make winter clothing out of the skins and freezing food for the dark of winter—*food for you, Tiny.*" His own words seemed alien to him; the inflection frightening. "Can you fucking *grasp* what I'm telling you?" He stared at the terrified man for several agonizing seconds as his anger subsided. "Never insult me again," he finally said softly, raspily.

Tiny nodded quickly.

Clay heated water in the large pot on the wood-burning kitchen stove. Pulling a washcloth and a fresh towel out of the chest of drawers, he found a bar of soap and placed all three items near the kitchen sink. When the water was moderately hot, he placed a stopper in the drain and poured half the water into the sink. Ignoring Tiny, Clay stripped then washed his face and underarms. Rinsing from the pan, he dried himself, then sat down in the sink, washing his crotch and anus. He smiled as Tiny looked away, embarrassed. "Let me know when you want a bath."

Tiny frowned and shook his head. "No thanks."

Clay chuckled, finally rinsing and drying off.

He dressed in a change of clothing and joined Tiny at the table. "More coffee?"

Tiny sighed heavily. "No, thank you."

Clay poured himself more coffee, studying Tiny. "If I were in your position, I think I'd be upset too." He took a sip from his cup. "But . . . I think I might have accepted the situation by now. You know, there isn't a whole hell of a lot you can do right now except go along with this. Hell, I'm a law-abiding person." He watched as Tiny slowly faced him. "We're doing this because we have no choice. If we let you go, we die, simple as that. If we'd been a couple of crooks, we'd have wasted you by now and I think you know that."

Tiny nodded. "I know that."

Clay wondered if he'd just sensed an element of resignation in the big man's voice.

"I just feel so goddamned violated," continued Tiny. "All my life, I've planned for the day when I could go off by myself and enjoy my solitude. I saved all my life to afford that plane out there." He nodded toward the boarded-up windows. "Here in the middle of nowhere, I come back to my own little wilderness and find my windows busted, my bed gone and two fag . . . two men who've completely taken over my property." His voice quavered as if he were about to weep in frustration.

"The place was overrun with raccoons and birds. The animals broke your windows and ruined your mattress." Clay realized the unimportance of what he'd said and lowered his eyes. "Shit. Some consolation."

Tiny seemed impressed. "So what are you guys running from anyway?"

Clay laughed heartily. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"Try me," Tiny said. "It couldn't be any less believable than this."

Clay examined the man again, suddenly feeling a powerful attraction. His cock began to harden and he seriously considered that he'd become sexually deranged. Allowing himself to project into the future, past the current crisis, he imagined Alexei joining him in enticing men like Tiny, Carlson—even men like T.J.—into three-way sex. Then it dawned on him that he had no idea how Alexei felt about promiscuity. He wondered if he'd ever get his fill.

Cocksucker . . . yin . . . yang . . . Tiny, I want to suck your cock . . .

"Tell me," prodded Tiny.

"It's unbelievable."

Tiny shook his head. "Try me." He smiled for the first time.

Clay regarded the smile with suspicion. *You think you've found a weakness, don't you? Well, two can play this game. I'll find your weakness first.* "We both work for the DEA. We were operating undercover out of Prudhoe Bay and got fingered. To make a long story short, the cartel put out a contract on us and the DEA urged us to disappear until the thing blows over. Because of a leak within the DEA, the boss told us to hide out on our own. No one knows where we are."

Tiny's mouth opened.

"We stole a plane at the airport and flew it into a storm to lose our tail." Clay gestured toward the lake. "We landed on

the lake here and broke up. The plane is lying on the bottom."

Tiny turned and glanced out the window.

I'll be goddamned if he didn't buy it.

"You're making this up," said Tiny halfheartedly.

Clay made an Archie Bunker face. "Well, who gives a fuck if you believe it or not, huh?"

"Okay, okay." Tiny tried to calm Clay down. "It just sounds wild, that's all."

"It *is* wild," said Clay, pretending to cool down. "The bad part is that we have to hide out for the winter here with a bruiser with body odor who refuses to let himself be bathed."

Tiny frowned, obviously insulted.

"The good part is that we took off with the drug dealers' money—all two million of it."

The big man's eyebrows arched and his mouth fell open again. "On the bottom of the lake?"

Clay waved his hands in a negative gesture. "Naw, we got it out and hid it out there in the woods where no one will ever find it. Now, since half of it's mine, I'm prepared to make a deal with you."

Tiny looked at him expectantly, holding his breath.

"In a few more days, if you play ball with me, I'll suggest to Alex that we should begin to trust you and allow you to be untied. But it's up to you, stud. As long as we have a hostage/crook relationship, you'll stay tied up for the winter. But if you start treating us like house guests and act a little more friendly, things will change in more ways than one."

The big man nodded. "That's fair enough."

"Alex told you we'd more than make this worth your while. He's talking about a cut of the money out there in the deep woods. You'll get enough to retire on and make this place a palace." He studied Tiny's expression.

"Okay . . . " Tiny nodded, smiling broadly. "Okay, it's a deal."

"There's only one stipulation . . . "

Tiny's smile faded.

"This is between you and me, okay? Alex isn't as liberal as me. As a matter of fact, I don't think he'd want me to be very friendly with you. For sure, he wouldn't want me to be telling you all about being DEA agents and making deals with you."

"Just you and me," confirmed the big man, his smile growing bigger.

"Great," said Clay, walking to the stove to retrieve another pot of hot water. "Now, time for your bath."

Tiny seemed to be straining to perpetuate the smile. "Why don't you just pull off the tape and let me wash myself, then put the tape back on?"

"No can do, stud," Clay said casually. "Alex would know the tape had been undone." He placed the pot on the counter, watching Tiny irritably.

Slowly, the big man stood up, grimacing at the consequences. Clay knelt and unbuckled the belt at Tiny's feet, deftly unbuckling the one at his waist as well. As Tiny stammered a protest, Clay pulled down his trousers and shorts, exposing two unusually large testicles.

"Sit," ordered Clay.

Tiny sat, looking away in embarrassment as Clay removed his shoes and socks.

"Okay, up again."

The big man stood.

"Back against the sink."

Tiny turned, facing Clay, watching him pour hot water in the sink, moderating the temperature with cold water.

Clay unbuttoned and pushed Tiny's shirt off his shoulders, exposing a moderate mat of chest hair. He absently lathered the wash cloth with soap, scrutinizing the fine grey hair and powerful chest. He looked obliquely into Tiny's eyes and saw a mixture of fear and loathing and . . . *what else? What was that a glimpse of? Perhaps a slight bit of excitement, huh, Tiny? Oh, don't worry, I'll be gentle. I'll be gentle.*

The wash cloth fully lathered, he gently washed Tiny's face and neck, dropping down to his shoulders, finally rinsing the cloth and wiping away the soap. Lathering again, he washed the big man's underarms thoroughly, then his chest and navel. Tiny closed his eyes tightly as Clay rinsed the cloth again and wiped away the soap and odor.

Clay looked again at the shriveled cock and remarkable balls, feeling a tightness in his throat, a dryness in his mouth. He lathered the cloth again and slowly knelt. "Spread your legs a little."

Tiny spread his trembling legs, the muscle definition still evident underneath a half inch layer of fat. As Clay stroked and lathered the big legs, he watched for a sign from the hibernating penis. *Did it just rise somewhat? Hasn't it grown slightly? Yes, it has. It surely has.* The cloth finally reached the man's crotch and elicited a flinch, a gasp. He fondled the testicles, washing them, weighing them one after another, all the time watching the penis grow and grow. He peeled back the thick, abundant foreskin, exposing a bright pink head, now two inches across. Washing it lovingly, the cock grew to full erection, expanding the foreskin to its maximum stretch.

Rising dreamily, Clay rinsed the washcloth and soaped it again. Reaching for a coffee cup, he filled it with warm water and poured it over Tiny's cock and balls. Sinking to the wet floor, Clay pushed the wash cloth into the crack of the big man's ass, causing him to moan. Lovingly, Clay slipped the cock into his mouth, holding it there, savoring it.

"No," groaned Tiny. "Oh, God, no. I didn't want this to *ever* happen."

Oh, yes you did, Tiny. Your hard-on betrays you. Not only did you want it to happen, but you'll want it again and again . . . and again . . .

Tiny's sphincter muscle relaxed, inviting more of the wash cloth. Clay reacted by slipping the thick cock into his throat, urging the powerful leg muscles to flex, inducing the sphincter muscle to clamp down on the wash cloth. He pulled off the cock and sucked each testicle into his mouth one at a time. It reminded him of a time when he was eight and tried to get a lemon inside his mouth on a lark.

Clay pulled back and relished the sight of the splendid genitals. Pulling out his own cock, he stroked himself, then went down on Tiny again. Even with his limited experience, he knew that Tiny wouldn't last more than another few seconds. He therefore chose to skip the build-up and bury the shaft with each thrust, as if the two men had been locked together for

several minutes. Tiny howled in ecstasy, locking one leg around Clay's neck, fucking Clay's mouth. Semen gushed from Tiny's not-so-tiny cock, filling Clay's throat with the substance to which he'd become addicted.

Alexei arrived near dusk, loaded with eleven rabbits and covered with rabbit blood. It began to snow heavily. Keeping an eye on Tiny through the window, Clay and Alexei skinned and gutted the rabbits, bringing the pelts inside and processing the meat for cold storage in the tree in back. Exhausted, Alexei washed his body the same way Clay had done earlier, watching Clay prepare dinner. To Alexei's surprise, Tiny carried on an intelligent and friendly conversation, telling all about a thirty-five year love affair with Alaska. He was fifty-eight years old and was married once when he was twenty-three to a girl who was half Eskimo. Because of the girl's attachment to her Japanese father, the marriage had not worked out, releasing Tiny to pursue a career as a part time trapper/fishing guide. Later, as the oil business had become lucrative on the Slope, he became a heavy equipment operator and began making enough money to afford flying lessons and a cheap, single engine hydroplane. He began spending all his R and R and vacation time building the cabin from scratch, hauling in materials himself. When he wasn't working on the Slope, he worked as a bush pilot, dropping fishermen off at remote lakes and returning later to pick them up. Finally, he'd saved up enough money to buy the sleek, twin-engine seaplane and the finishing touches to the cabin. He wanted to interact with his fellow humans on his own terms, *when* he wanted. He relished the serenity of being alone for days, miles from anyone else.

During dinner, Clay felt Alexei's eyes exploring him and wondered if the Russian could see through the facade. As Clay fed Tiny and himself, he turned and acknowledged Alexei's pensive expression. "Whatcha thinking about?"

Alexei took a bite of trout. "Nothing in particular."

Clay looked at him thoughtfully, wondering if he could ever love the man. He knew that Alexei was his only recourse—knew that Alexei loved him. But would Alexei understand his continuing need for other men?

That night, Alexei tied Tiny to the stove again and gently placed a couple of pelts underneath his head. Joining Clay in the warmth of their sleeping bag, he whispered, "He smells a lot nicer today. Did you bathe him?"

"Yeah," Clay whispered.

"Maybe you should change his clothes."

"I changed his underwear, trousers and socks, but I couldn't get the shirt off without taking off the tape."

"We'll take the tape off tomorrow morning," Alexei said, surprising Clay. "I think we can trust him now. You must have really set him straight, huh?"

"I think I got my message across."

"Okay then, let's play it like this: we hide all the guns except the one I'll wear. Because of the snowstorm, we'll all be inside most of the time anyway." He looked at the snow sticking to the window. "I think we got all the rabbits harvested just in time."

Clay and Alexei made love without regard to Tiny. They went after each other with hunger and zest, probing, licking, consuming. Clay positioned Alexei into a sixty-nine position, arranging a view of Tiny against the opposite wall. As Alexei feasted upon him, Clay reciprocated, forcing the thick cock down his throat again and again. Reaching a frenzied pitch, Clay and Alexei climaxed in concert, filling the room with a duet of moans.

Recovering from a powerful climax, Clay focused on Tiny's face. He could have sworn that Tiny licked his lips.

TWELVE

The Following Morning

Clay awakened to an eerie silence. The stove had burned out. He jumped out of the sleeping bag, awakening Alexei, then ran to the kitchen window, which was almost completely caked with snow. He peered through a small opening and saw that a thermometer on the porch indicated a temperature of plus nine degrees. "Jesus!" he moaned, his teeth clattering.

He quickly fetched two logs and threw them inside the stove, spraying them with lighter fluid. He ran to the kitchen and brought back a match, igniting the logs. Satisfied that the logs would catch fire, he slipped into the bag with Alexei, holding him for warmth.

Alexei kissed him tenderly, looking into his eyes. Clay responded with a passionate look and Alexei kissed him again, probing with his tongue. Clay's cock sprang forth, luring Alexei down into the bag to hungrily suck it.

Still shivering, Clay glanced at Tiny, who looked away. Knowing that Tiny wouldn't be able to keep his eyes off the action, Clay closed his eyes and fantasized the big man standing over the sleeping bag, masturbating. As the imaginary jissom showered his face, Clay gave his load to Alexei and looked hungrily at Tiny, who looked away less quickly than before.

Clay closed his eyes and relished both the real and fantasized experiences as Alexei got out of the bag and into his insulated coveralls. Glancing at Tiny, Alexei put on his socks and boots and grabbed his parka. "Is there a snow shovel in the shed?"

Tiny nodded. "Yeah. It's hanging on the wall in back."

Alexei braced himself and opened the door to a four foot wall of snow. Climbing over it, he closed the door and carefully probed for the stairs.

"I have to take a leak," said Tiny flatly.

Clay awakened from his reverie, trading the warmth of his bed for a cold shirt and trousers. He walked to Tiny and knelt, untying the rope. Still kneeling, he helped Tiny to his feet and unzipped his pants. Reaching inside, he was shocked to feel a full erection and looked up with a smile.

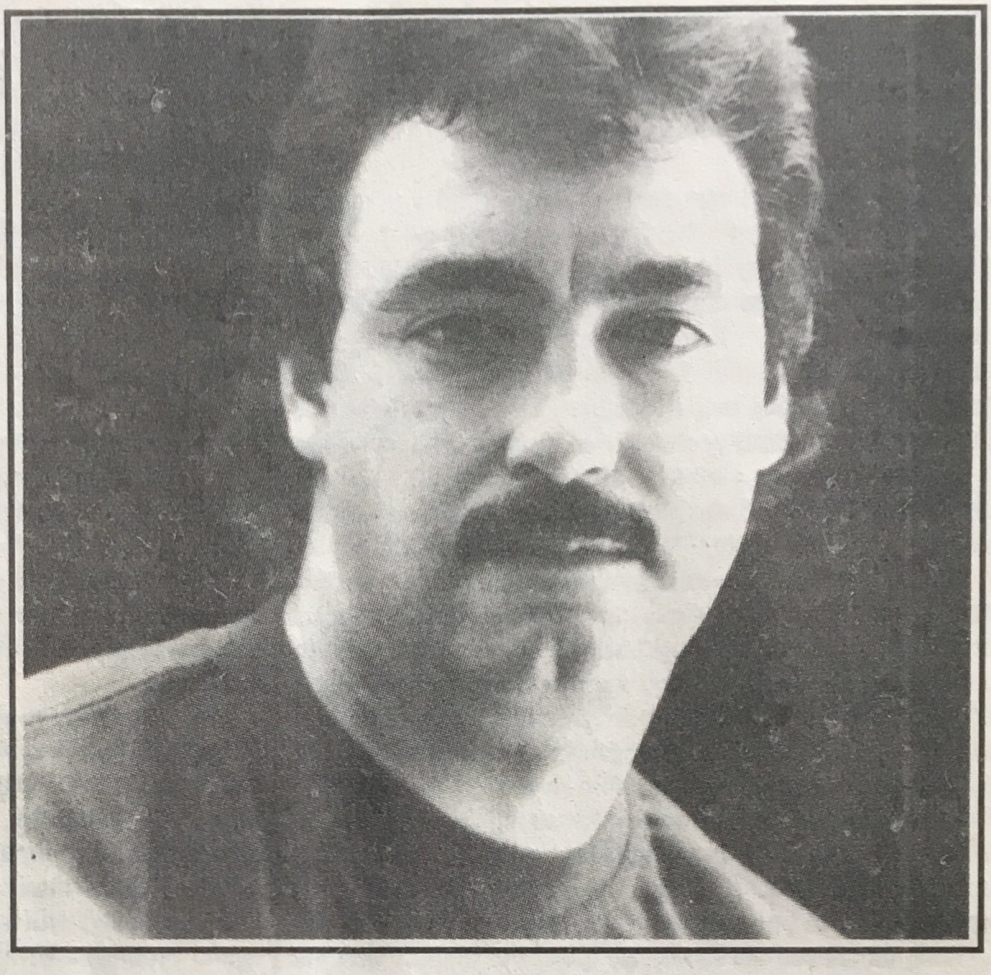
"It's a piss hard," explained Tiny. "Nothing more, nothing less."

Clay nodded and pulled the huge cock through the fly, holding on to it.

Grimacing, Tiny pulled away, rushing to the toilet en-

[Continued on page 60]

CYGNUS



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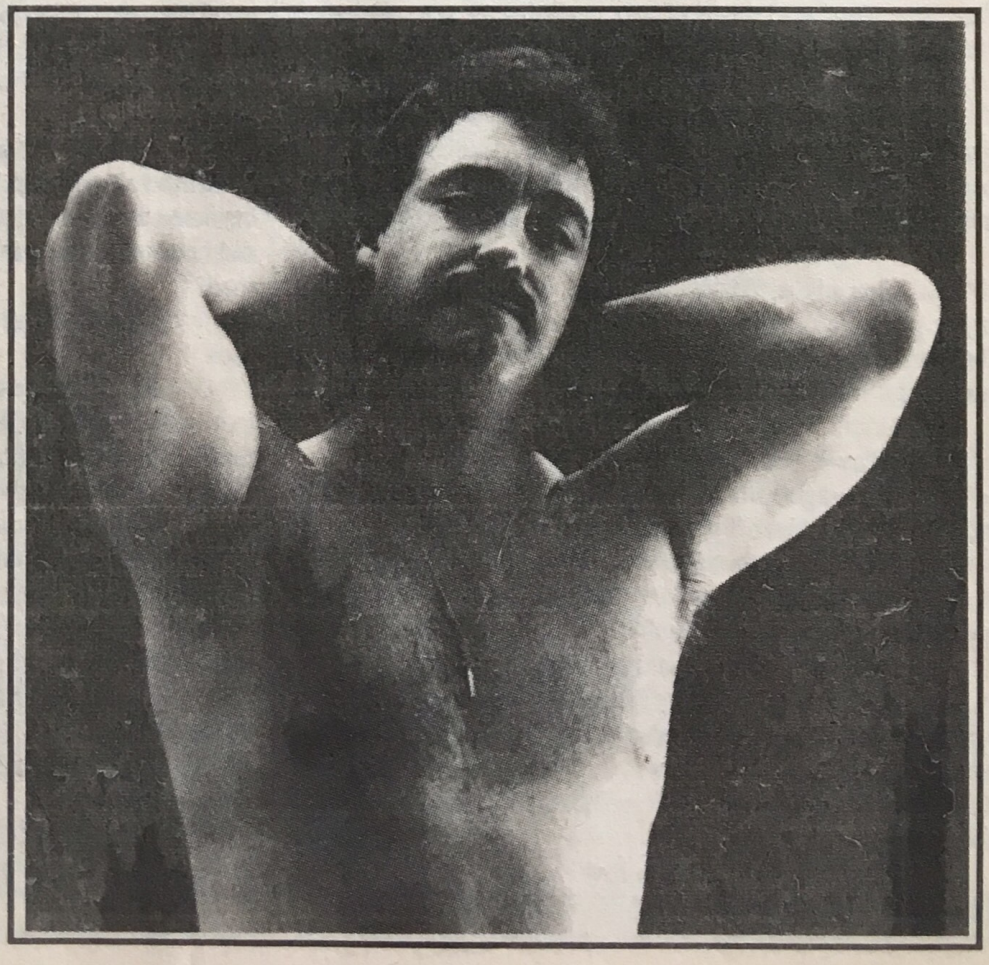
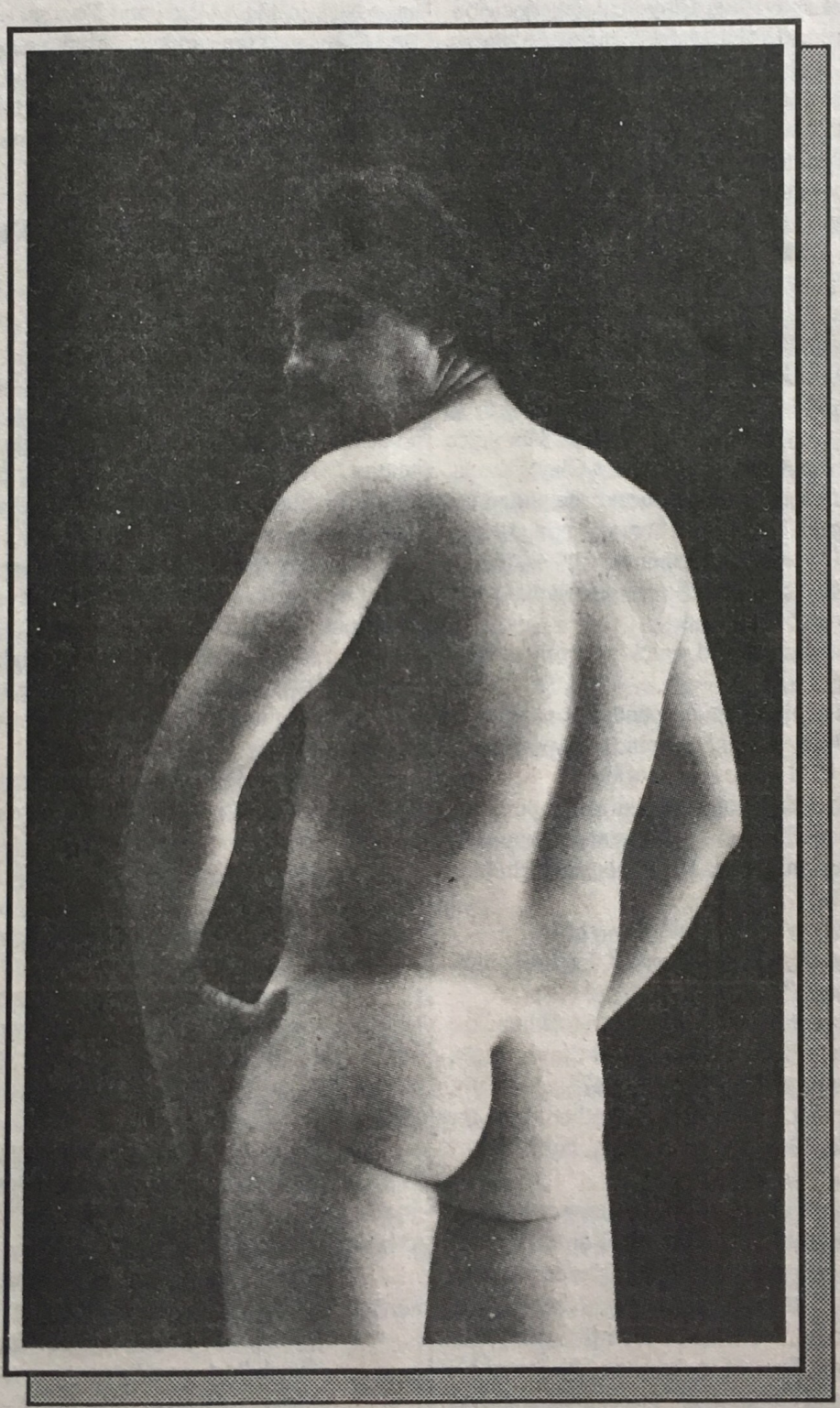


CYGNUS is 26, still single and goes for over 40, butch bottoms who look like Robert Conrad and Bob Hoskins.



closure, turning and opening the latch with his tied hands. Clay shrugged and walked to his boots and socks. Yawning, he put on his socks and one boot, pretending to ignore Tiny as he walked out of the enclosure and stood, his cock rising and falling slightly with each heartbeat.

"Piss hard, huh?" Clay looked hungrily at the thick member. "Come over here," ordered Clay.

"No," said Tiny, his voice low and rough . . . sensuous.

Clay looked at him, surprised.

"*You* come *here*." Tiny's voice sounded altered somehow, distracting Clay from the fact that roles had been switched.

As Alexei began shoveling, Clay made his decision. He slowly walked to Tiny and knelt again, focusing on the big cock. He focused past it to the door, then back again, past, back. "Turn around," whispered Clay.

Tiny squinted at him, confused, slowly turning.

Clay unraveled the tape from Tiny's thick wrists and guided the man's hips until the penis once again swayed before him. He slowly enveloped the cock, pressing his uvula flat against the back of his throat. Taking a huge breath, Clay consumed it, feeling Tiny's knees slightly buckle. Gently, he reached for the rough hands and placed them behind his head.

"Aw fuck," whispered Tiny, grinding his pelvis, rubbing his fat fingers through Clay's hair. "Aw Jesus," he whispered louder, his voice rising in timbre. His legs began to tremble as he pulled at Clay's hair. "Aw fuck." His voice lowered in warning. He rammed his cock down Clay's throat, slapping his testicles against his partner's neck. He pulled out and rammed again and again, his prostate hemorrhaging semen.

Clay swallowed over and over, then held the last squirt on his tongue, savoring the freshness of it, convinced that it had never been consumed by any other man.

The shoveling sound stopped, quickly parting the two men.

Tiny stuffed his penis inside his pants and swiftly unbuckled the belt around his ankles. Rubbing his wrists, he walked into the kitchen. "I'll make some coffee."

Clay went to his other boot and sat down to put it on. He looked at Tiny, who stared back. A safe distance away, they studied one another. Clay smiled and shook his head, eliciting a similar response from Tiny.

"You're blowing my mind," said Tiny softly.

"I can't help myself, Tiny," Clay said, his smile turning plaintive. "I really can't."

To Clay, it appeared that Tiny couldn't fathom the confession, yet seemed to project compassion for Clay's plight.

"What? Is it like some kind of addiction?" asked Tiny.

"You might say that." Clay placed another log in the stove, stoking it. "Looks like you like it now, huh?" Clay grinned.

Tiny shrugged and turned to make more coffee. "I really don't know what to think about it yet. You know they say that a hard cock has no conscience." He glanced at Clay again. "We're stuck here for the winter, so I might as well do as the Romans, while in Rome." He took the coffee pot to the stove and placed it on top. Searching the room, he found his hooded Arctic coveralls and climbed into them, pulling gloves out. "I think I'll go help your partner." He walked to the door and opened it.

Clay watched as Alexei assumed a defensive position. "It's all right. I untied him. He wants to help."

Alexei nodded and rested as Tiny went around to the shed to get another shovel.

Clay closed the door and began making breakfast. He felt his guilt slowly being chipped away as he relished the promise of a long winter with two virile, horny men. He very much hoped that it would all work out and that the three men could strike a harmonic.

Clay finished preparing breakfast and called the tired men back inside. Alexei and Tiny sat at each end of the table and Clay faced the window. All three ate heartily.

"I appreciate your untying me." Tiny looked at Alexei, then Clay. "You didn't make a mistake." He continued eating his bacon, eggs and hash browns.

Alexei nodded.

"Alex, meet Tiny," Clay said. "Tiny, this is Alex."

Tiny rose and shook Alexei's hand, then turned to Clay.

Clay did likewise and shook Tiny's hand. "And I'm Clay."

"Clay and Alex . . . okay."

All three sat down and continued eating.

"Quite frankly, Tiny, we feel pretty bad about this invasion of your privacy, but we just don't have too much of a choice." Alexei glanced at Clay. "My partner and I are in sort of a jam. That's all we can tell you, but we'll make it up to you later, I promise you."

Tiny smiled. "Appreciate that." He shrugged. "At first I was pretty pissed off, but I put myself in your shoes. It'll work out."

Alexei chewed his food thoughtfully, then looked up at Tiny. "I'll only say this once and then we can all be friends."

Tiny and Clay recognized the seriousness of what he was about to say.

"Never lose sight of the fact that I'll kill you if you try to leave or turn on us. It's best that you not make any funny moves. Do you understand?"

Tiny nodded. His face registered genuine fear of Alexei.

The three men finished eating in silence

That afternoon, the temperature went up some twenty degrees to just below freezing. As Alexei and Clay processed more rabbit pelts and struggled to fashion long, parka-style coats, Tiny located a sewing kit in a box underneath the kitchen sink.

"Here it is," said Tiny. "I thought I had one here some place." He inspected the small needles. "I don't know how much use you'll get out of these. They look pretty small compared to your big ones."

Clay looked at his large needle and length of thick thread, comparing it to the one Tiny held up.

"You bring those with you?" asked Tiny.

"Yeah," Clay said.

Alexei glanced at Tiny, then resumed sewing the pelts.

"You planned this then." The older man's face broke out in a sly grin.

Neither Clay nor Alexei confirmed his revelation.

Tiny looked suspicious. "You know, there's one thing that bothers me."

"What's that?" asked Alexei lazily.

"What happens to me if the guys chasing you catch up?"

Both Clay and Alexei looked at him thoughtfully.

"If you thought to bring heavy thread to make parkas, then you have some kind of contingency plan," continued Tiny.

Clay glanced at Alexei, offering the question to him.

Alexei sighed, hesitating. "If they come, we'll give you your rifle back. If you're smart, you'll go off on your own and wait until the smoke clears. The people looking for us are pretty mean, Tiny, so don't get any heroic ideas about offering testimony or shit like that. They aren't cops, man, and if they see you, they'll kill you."

"Who are they?"

Clay wondered if Tiny were about to give him away.

"CIA," Alexei said flatly, shocking Clay.

Tiny frowned, glancing at Clay.

"See?" said Alexei. "You wouldn't believe it anyway, so let's just drop it. If they come and you're stupid enough to run and try to help them, then you deserve what they'll do to you." He pricked his finger. "Damn!"

"Let's take a break," suggested Clay. "Hey, Tiny, you got any cards?"

Tiny nodded slightly, obviously trying to rid himself of the terrible thoughts he'd conjured. "Uhh . . . yeah. I'll get them." Tiny opened a drawer in the kitchen and pulled out a worn deck of cards.

"What can you guys play?" asked Clay, sitting at the kitchen table.

Alexei put down his sewing and joined him, pulling out a chair for Tiny.

"Oh, I can play canasta, gin, poker . . . " Tiny took out the cards and shuffled them.

"Alex?" asked Clay.

"Poker. That's it. Sorry."

"Poker it is. Anyone have any change?" Clay looked inside his pockets, pulling out three nickels and five pennies.

Alexei pulled out two quarters and six pennies.

"Well, I don't have any change, so we'll have to play with matches," announced Tiny, getting up to retrieve a box of matches. He divided the matches up. "This way we stay friends."

They played dealer's choice for nearly an hour, trading one joke after another. Clay was happy that the undercurrent of mistrust and potential violence had subsided, but he wanted more. He wanted to tell Alexei that he'd sucked Tiny's cock twice and wanted to do it again. He wanted to spend the endless darkness of winter servicing each man, bloating himself with their cum. He wanted to experiment with anal sex—wanted to feel the hot urine of each man at the same time upon his chest, inside his mouth. He had to know his saturation point. But he wondered if Alexei would still want him, knowing he was a satyr.

It was Clay's turn to deal. "Let's see . . . " Clay glanced at each man, his heart racing in anticipation. "Strip poker. Nothing wild. No folding . . . and the loser of each hand has to take off one article of clothing."

Alexei chuckled, shaking his head at Tiny, who looked anxiously at Alexei.

"Okay?" asked Clay.

Both men shrugged.

So you *are* curious, thought Clay of Alexei. "And . . . the loser has to blow the other two."

As a look of panic came to Tiny's face, Alexei studied Clay, obviously wondering what he was up to.

"Okay, if you've never done it before, you can *owe* the others a blow job, okay?" Clay smiled lecherously at Tiny. "But you have to pay up before spring, either with a blowjob, or . . . let's say a hundred bucks to each man. Is that fair?" Clay searched the eyes of both men.

While Tiny looked relieved, Alexei seemed amused.

Clay dealt the first hand, finally looking at the hand he'd dealt himself: three jacks, an ace of diamonds and a nine of hearts.

Tiny and Alexei discarded in a pile. Clay discarded his three jacks.

"One card," said Tiny confidently.

Clay dealt him a card, then looked at Alexei, whose puzzled look had turned to one of resignation.

"Two."

Clay dealt him two cards, then dealt himself three. "I'll take three." He stared at a two of clubs, a queen of spades and a nine of clubs. "Two nines . . . . Shit. Tiny? Let's see your cards."

Tiny showed three kings, smiling. Alexei showed a pair of threes and a pair of fives. Clay took off his left boot.

As darkness descended in mid-afternoon, both Alexei and Clay were down to their undershorts and Tiny was down to his undershorts and shirt. Tiny dealt the last hand, which Clay lost.

Clay stood and took off his undershorts, exposing an erection. He looked at Alexei. "Can I collect?"

Alexei crossed his arms, intrigued. "You're a grown man."

"You sure?"

Alexei nodded. "Hell, you've done it before."

Tiny blushed and looked out the window.

"How did you know?" asked Clay, feeling a powerful relief.

"A sixth sense, I guess. That and you're breath gave it away."

Tiny abruptly got to his feet. "Uhh . . . I have to go take a leak." He walked into the enclosure.

"I don't want to lose you," Clay whispered.

"You won't," Alexei assure him, kissing him lightly on the lips. "It's going to be boring enough as it is around here. Might as well have fun. Just don't expect *me* to have sex with him, though. He's not my type."

"I'll never forget this, Alexei."

"I'll never let you forget it either. I'll throw it up to

you for years."

The word "years" disturbed him. It meant that Alexei had made a commitment and would expect the same .

Tiny came out of the enclosure with a massive erection.

"Jesus Christ!" yelped Alexei.

THIRTEEN

Eleven Days Later

Tiny's airplane had been moved next to the shore above the ice and camouflaged with netting, which was impregnated with snow. The lake was almost totally iced over and the daylight was sparse.

The sleeping bag had been expanded to include room for Tiny. Three long, snow-white parkas hung on the back wall over the boarded-up windows. The good window in the kitchen was covered with pelts to keep lamp light from being seen from the air.

The three men slept soundly, Clay lying in the middle, an arm around Alexei, a leg between Tiny's legs .

Clay heard the faint sound and wondered if it were part of his dream. Then the dream dissolved, leaving him the view of a darkened ceiling and the sound of an airplane.

Alexei also heard it and swiftly got out of the bag, opening the door, peering out. A blast of Arctic air immediately numbed his skin. He closed the door and leaned against it, his hand pressing against his forehead as if he'd just thought of something important.

Clay pulled himself out of the bag, causing Tiny to stir. Turning up the faint light in the kerosene lamp on the chest of drawers, he dressed in trousers and shirt. "What's wrong?" He picked up a log to place on the pot stove.

"No, no fire," whispered Alexei, listening for the airplane. "I never thought of heat detectors. They could find us that way."

"But how could they get here without landing a plane on the lake?" asked Clay.

Alexei was deep in thought. "It's the only way until next spring."

Clay pointed at the stove. "It's been out for hours. It's thirty degrees in here, for crissakes."

Alexei pulled the pelt away from the kitchen window, looking for a silhouette against the bright stars. He listened for the airplane to return. It didn't. "Never underestimate your enemies, Clay. Never." He slipped inside his insulated coveralls and boots, grabbing a parka. "They could have launched a glider." He rushed outside.

"Glider?"

"The Allies used gliders against the Nazis during World War Two," said Tiny, stretching.

"Yeah, I read something like that." Clay walked to the kitchen window and peered out at Alexei, who stood on the snow-covered pier, staring out over the frozen lake. "How did you sleep?"

"Good." He yawned again. "This sleeping bag is cozy as hell."

Clay walked to the stove and dropped two logs inside.

"So how do Colombian drug lords get hold of heat sensors and gliders?"

Clay looked at him dumbly. "Pardon?"

"You said that you were running from drug lords."

"Oh, yeah," said Clay absently, looking at the door as he heard Alexei's boots on the porch. "I'm just as surprised as you." He regarded the puzzled look on Tiny's face.

Alexei came back inside. "Go ahead with the logs, Clay."

Clay lit the logs.

The Russian sat at the kitchen table, looking at his watch. "It's close to sunrise. It was probably someone flying off course. T.J. would search in a pattern and we would've heard him further away, working his way toward us."

"T.J.?" questioned Tiny.

Alexei and Clay looked at Tiny, who got out of the sleeping bag and quickly put on clothes.

"I think I missed something somewhere along the line," continued Tiny. "Who the fuck is T.J.? I thought you were running from a bunch of South Americans."

Clay winced, afraid of Alexei's reaction.

Alexei turned to Clay for an answer. "Clay?"

"When he first asked, I told him the truth—that we were running from the CIA, but he didn't believe it," said Clay. "So I told him something he would believe." Clay glanced at Alexei with regret.

Even in the dim light, it was obvious that Tiny had become pale. "CIA?" He was incredulous. "But that's *us* . . . that's the U.S. of A." He stared at the light from the stove, shaking his head. "So, if they're CIA, then who are you?" He looked accusingly at both men.

"Someone the CIA will torture and kill if they find," Alexei said slowly, emphatically. "Like you."

Tiny looked as if he'd been slapped. His eyes were filled with terror. "What have you gotten me into, for crissakes? Tortured?"

"We have something they want . . . bad," said Alexei.

"What?"

"A lousy computer disk," said Clay. Even before Alexei glared at him, he realized that he shouldn't have mentioned it to Tiny.

"Disk? What disk? Where?"

Alexei looked at him suspiciously. "The less you know, the less you'll spill if they get hold of you."

Tiny rolled his eyes up in despair. "What a fucking mess. Something tells me I'll be lucky to get out of this alive."

"I thought the cabin was abandoned, Tiny," said Alexei. "I never intended to get anyone involved."

"Then tie me up again," demanded Tiny. "I don't want it to look like I'm cooperating."

"Oh, don't be naive!" snapped Alexei. "You have no idea how these guys operate. They come in and kill everyone. *They don't make arrests, Tiny!* Especially not out here!"

Tiny slowly shook his head, forlorned.

"Like Alex said before, your best bet is to head out into the woods and wait until the smoke clears," reminded Clay.

"I'm a goddamned tracker, man! Animals make tracks—especially big motherfuckers like me!" Tiny's face

was flushed. "If they don't track me down and shoot me, they'll burn the cabin and probably sink my fucking plane—everything I've worked for!" Bitter tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Wait a goddamned minute!" boomed Alexei. He walked to the stove, his white parka making him look twice as large, twice as imposing. "What are we going to do, roll over and play dead?!" He toned down his voice somewhat. "The odds are against them finding us. The roof is covered with snow and they'd probably have to be right over us to detect the heat from the stove. If they do spot us and land on the lake, they're gonna get mauled. They've tried to take me before and they got mauled then, too." Alexei walked to Tiny and stood behind him, gently placing his hands on the heavy man's shoulders. "I promise you, Tiny. I promise that you, this cabin and that plane will be here after our friends are on the bottom of the lake." He walked to the kitchen window and looked out once more. "You can take that to the bank, Tiny."

It was mid-afternoon and the sun had already set. Tiny sat on the sleeping bag, staring at the flame from the kerosene lamp. Alexei sat at the kitchen table, watching Tiny.

The door flew open and Clay walked inside with three glasses filled with snow. "Cocktail hour!" Getting no response from Tiny, he shrugged at Alexei and poured Canadian whiskey over the snow in each glass. He walked to Tiny and extended his drink. "Here, have a shot."

Tiny slowly turned and stared at the glass. He glanced up at Clay and hesitantly took the drink.

"That's more like it." Clay pulled a chair around to face Tiny. "Cheers." He held his glass up to one, then the other. "To survival."

Tiny chuckled bitterly, toasting Clay, then turning to toast Alexei. "To survival."

Alexei toasted, sipping his drink, looking away thoughtfully, worriedly.

"You know . . . " Tiny smiled wanly. "I was just sitting here feeling sorry for myself, when something just popped into my mind." He took a sip from his drink and shifted to face both men. "I know you're telling the truth because you didn't kill me and take off with my plane. Hell, I know I'm not worth anything to you guys. If anything, I'm just in the way. But you guys trust me and respect me." He stood and scanned the inside of the cabin. "You respect my property . . . " He drank the rest of the whiskey and walked to the kitchen, filling the glass again. "I don't think I want to know anything else. I'd just soon not know." He returned to the chair and sat. "When it's time, just tell me where my rifle is and I'll head off around the lake." He groped himself. "These last couple of weeks have been pretty special to me, you know? Nothing like this has ever happened to me . . . . And after you guys are gone, it'll probably never happen again." He took his cock out and stroked it.

Clay glanced at Alexei, who was shaking his head, a look-at-the-monster-you-created grin on his face. Clay took off his clothes and crawled to Tiny. "Take those clothes off, you impetuous fool."

Tiny dropped his undershorts and trousers to the floor. He reached out for the back of Clay's head and pulled him to his cock, groaning as the hotness of Clay's mouth brought him to full erection. He glanced at Alexei. "Want to join in?"

Alexei reached for a can of Crisco and a towel. "I wasn't in the mood, but when Clay goes down on that monster, I get in the mood." He walked to them, taking off his clothes.

As Clay slowly sucked Tiny's cock, Alexei smeared a handful of shortening over his penis and into Clay's rectum. Carefully, Alexei pushed his cock past one, then two sphincter muscles, holding back to allow the muscles to adjust. Clay became inflamed and sucked eagerly, urging Alexei's cock further inside him. As Alexei accommodated him, Clay felt a sense of rapture, something he'd never before experienced. It was as if he had been transformed into a helium-filled balloon-like creature, with a throat at one end and a rectum at the other. It felt like both Alexei's and Tiny's cocks were colliding inside his body.

Clay felt that he'd reached the pinnacle of sexual experiences. He wished that it could last longer, but felt the imminent eruption rumbling in his groin. Sensing that both Tiny and Alexei were likewise coiled to explode, he pursed his lips and sphincters in concert. His moans merged with his partners'; he felt semen gushing into his mouth and anus at the same time. And then Clay spilled his abundant load into the white fur, experiencing the most satisfying climax of his life. There was no more semen to discharge. He was as dry as a sun-baked skull in the Mojave Desert.

Clay and Alexei collapsed on their backs on either side of Tiny's huge feet.

Absently, Clay kissed Tiny's foot and kneaded his calf. It suddenly flashed upon his brain that he was in love with Tiny. He glanced at Alexei, who watched him with a puzzled, concerned look.

FOURTEEN

The Following Morning

The sound of the airplane sent all three men into a scramble. Having slept in his clothing, Alexei frantically put on his boots and rushed into his insulated coveralls. Quickly checking his Magnum, he threw the parka on and rushed outside. Both Tiny and Clay had just finished putting on their boots when Alexei ran back inside, his eyes wide.

Alexei gasped for breath. "Parachutes. They're landing on the lake."

Tiny and Clay quickly retrieved their parkas.

"Clay, you climb up the ridge in back. Blend with the snow and don't shoot unless you have to. It's snowing, so they can't track you." He momentarily held on to him. "Be careful." He turned to leave.

"Dmitri, the rifle!" yelled Tiny. "Where is it?"

Alexei turned and looked at the heavy man, puzzled. "I'll show you," he mumbled.

As Clay ran up the rise, he watched Alexei pull the rifle out of a clump of evergreens. The only two men that meant anything in his life split up and ran in opposite directions, disappearing in the snow-impregnated darkness.

Clay waited, staring out over the lake. He heard the cracking of a twig and snapped his head in the direction Alexei

had gone. He thought he saw movement and felt an iciness enveloping him. He felt a terror more stark than when he was making night-time beach landings in enemy territory in Viet Nam. Automatic rifle fire came from the direction Tiny had gone, followed by the crack of a rifle, then silence. An icy numbness crept over him.

The vague outline of a man appeared just below the ridge, prompting Clay to pull out the .38 revolver. The man slowly walked toward the cabin, an AK47 automatic rifle trained and ready to fire. He wore a white combat uniform, complete with infrared goggles protruding out of a parka-like hood. To Clay he looked awesome, unbeatable.

Something hard pressed against his head, pinning him to the ground. He heard two short whistles, which were obviously meant for the strangely dressed man below.

"Well, what do we have here?" The voice was familiar.

A hand inside an exotically constructed glove reached for the .38 and threw it far away into the snow.

Clay heard a click and the familiar voice continued: "Is the house secure? I'm bringing in Pascal. Any sign of Cheetah? Over."

A radio voice: "Negative."

"Let's go."

As the pressure against Clay's head was relieved, he turned to see a man outfitted the same as the one down the ridge. He stared into the goggles, aware of his own reflection. He stood and cautiously walked down the slope.

Prodded by the muzzle of the automatic rifle, he climbed the stairs and entered the cabin. Burt Perkins stood against the opposite wall, his parka hood back and his goggles in his hand. His expression was grim.

"Take off the coat, Clay." It was the familiar voice from behind.

Clay took off the parka and dropped it to the floor. He felt handcuffs being placed on his wrists from behind.

"On your face on the cozy looking pallet here."

Clay turned and recognized Skip, smiling back at him. "Hey, Skip. I thought that voice was familiar." His own voice quavered with fear, angering him.

"On your face, cocksucker."

"Ooooo," crooned Clay, his voice more normal. "Nasty motherfucker, aren't you?" He lay on the sleeping bag, determined to make it rough on Skip.

"I'll re-invent nasty for you, Pascal." Skip turned and placed his rifle, hand radio and a small bag on a chair. "Let's go for it."

Both agents began searching the cabin, emptying drawers on the floor and sifting through the pelts on the wall and floor.

"You think we're stupid enough to hide it in here?" said Clay, chuckling.

The sound of an airplane prompted Skip to rush to the radio. "Eagle to Blackbird . . ."

"Blackbird." A vaguely familiar voice, static.

"We have Houston but not the Cat. No data yet. Seeking Houston's help. Over."

"Eagle, I can barely copy. Repeat." More static.

Skip almost shouted, "We have Houston but not the Cat. No data yet. Seeking Houston's help. Over."

"Read you. Breaking up. Back in thirty minutes. Over."

Skip placed the radio on the chair and studied Clay, who stared at him with contempt.

Burt called Skip to the kitchen and whispered something. Skip nodded and watched Burt adjust his goggles and leave.

Skip turned to Clay. "Where is the data, asshole? I'm not in a good mood since your friend killed one of my men."

"Good for him," gloated Clay.

Automatic fire erupted from outside, followed by silence.

Seconds later, Burt rushed through the door. "I got him, Skip! I got him!" He turned and ran down the stairs, followed by Skip.

Clay watched the open doorway, telling himself again and again that it was all staged. He couldn't believe that Alexei could be so sloppy. Still, he felt a rising anxiety. The stress was overpowering; his anger had never been so focused and vengeful.

As the frigid air became unbearable, Skip came back in, followed by Burt. Both men smiled. Clay searched their eyes, disbelieving.

"Your lover just bought it," said Skip, relishing it.

"Go fuck yourself." Clay turned his head away. "That was dumb, man. No wonder we can't win wars any more."

Skip walked back into Clay's vision. His face was flushed with anger. He nodded at Burt, who put his goggles back on and walked outside. "I'm wasting my time with you, cocksucker. Now it's time for our little truth serum." Skip fetched his bag and pulled out a vial and a syringe. He smiled viciously. "We call it 'Rat Piss.' It settles in the testicles and they tell me it feels like broken glass. Sort of like gout in the balls." He chuckled, drawing thirty cc's from the vial, then dropping his knee into the pit of Clay's back. Grabbing Clay's flexed arm, he quickly found a bulging vein and injected the liquid while Clay struggled to catch his breath.

Clay suddenly felt hot and panicked at the idea of receiving an overdose and dying. His heart began to pound; he felt a rush, as if he'd sniffed cocaine.

Skip threw two more logs inside the stove and sat, watching the results of his handiwork.

The rush faded away, leaving Clay acutely feverish. He began to sweat and squirm. His testicles already felt much warmer than the rest of his body and were growing warmer. They seemed to have grown larger and heavier as well. The awful sickness associated with having been struck in the testicles manifested in his stomach—at first mild, then growing more severe. Clay looked up at Skip. "I'm going to kill you, Skip. I'm going to kill you very . . . very . . . slowly . . . " His eyes widened as he felt the sensation of someone jumping on his balls with both feet. A yell thundered from his throat.

At the same time, the streaking, cracking sound of a high powered rifle reached them, followed by the sickening, hollow thud of a bullet hitting its target. Skip flinched, a look of puzzlement and fear on his face. He grabbed the hand radio.

"Burt?"

"Troy bought it, Skip," said Burt, his voice high piched in panic.

"Get the motherfucker, Burt," growled Skip.

"Two down and what?" gasped Clay. "Two more to go, right?" He managed a laugh in spite of the excruciating pain.

Skip looked impatiently at Clay. "It's up to you, man. I have the antidote right here . . . "

Clay yelled again and again, his testicles feeling as if they were about to explode.

" . . . You tell me where the data is, and I'll inject the antidote. Relief is only fifteen seconds away, Clay." Skip pulled down his goggles and picked up his rifle, sitting against the back wall. He aimed at the doorway and waited.

Clay drew into a ball, yelling into the pelts underneath.

"Where is the data?!" shouted Skip.

Clay began to convulse and wail, flailing over the floor like a freshly-hooked fish.

"In another five minutes, it'll do permanent damage, man!" Skip attempted to yell over Clay's cries. "The pain will never go away and you'll end up blowing your own brains out to get relief!"

Clay's veins bulged around his neck and his face turned dark red, his eyes so bloodshot that they appeared to be bleeding. Blood rushed from his mouth as he bit down on his tongue.

"I have the antidote!"

"I'll tell you!" yelled Clay . "I'll tell you!"

Excited, Skip rushed to him, hovering over him. "Where? Tell me and I'll inject you."

"In the snow . . . AAAAAHHHHHHH! . . . snow, at the base . . . Oh, Jesus . . . Oh, God . . . AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA! . . . base of the pier on the right . . . in a glass jar . . . "

Skip turned and ran for the door.

"INJECT ME, YOU MOTHERFUCK-ERRRRRRRRRR!"

Skip opened the door and rushed outside. Footfalls in the snow faded, then there was silence.

"SKIP, PLEASE! PLEEEEEEEEEASE!"

Irregular footfalls lured his gaze to the doorway, where he saw Skip backing into the cabin, his hands held high.

A big man in a white parka stood in the doorway, covered in blood. He extended a rifle, aimed at Skip's face.

Clay watched, biting down on one of the pelts. "Tiny!" He struggled to remain conscious.

"Burt!" yelled Skip.

"He can't hear you," growled Tiny. "He deposited all his blood on me when I cut his throat with a tin can."

"Tiny!" yelled Clay. "He has an antidote! He injected me with something! Please! PLEASE!"

Tiny pushed the muzzle of the rifle into Skip's mouth, breaking an eye tooth. "You heard the man, inject him."

Skip held his smarting mouth and walked to this bag. Tiny followed, resting the rifle barrel against Skip's rib cage.

With trembling hands, Skip withdrew 50 cc's of another liquid and knelt next to Clay. "I need light to find a vein."

Clay bit down on the pelt with all his strength.

Tiny grabbed the kerosene lamp and turned it up, holding it above Clay. Skip injected the antidote and carefully straightened up, dropping the syringe and the vial.

"Now the cuffs," ordered Tiny.

Skip reached inside a pocket for the key, staring in awe at the big man. "Who the hell are you, anyway?"

"The cuffs," Tiny growled.

Skip knelt and unlocked the cuffs, watching Clay as his moaning subsided. "He'll be sore for a few minutes, but the whole thing is reversible."

"Lie down on your face with your hands behind your back," ordered Tiny.

Skip did so and Tiny handcuffed him.

"Tiny?" mumbled Clay.

"Yes, Clay." Tiny's voice was different somehow.

"Where is Alex?" asked Clay, struggling to get up.

"I don't know." He looked down sadly. "I fired all the rifle shots. I never heard his pistol fire."

Clay sat up, still in extreme pain. "Got to find him. He might be wounded and bleeding . . . "

"Clay, listen to me." Tiny gently held him by the shoulders. "Did this man radio the plane?" He looked at the radio on the chair.

"Yes."

"When will the plane make another pass?"

"Someone said thirty minutes. I don't remember . . . . Confused."

"Can you remember the words he used to call the plane?"

"I . . . I don't know. Let me think."

"If we don't call the plane, this place will be crawling with CIA agents. Think!"

Skip sat up, staring at Tiny, a half-smile on his lips. "You're KGB."

"Think, Clay." Tiny persisted, ignoring Skip.

Skip moved closer. "He can't remember. Only I can call the plane. I'll make a deal with you, all right?" He became frantic. "I'll tell you where the data is if you'll let me go. I'll radio the plane and tell them that we have the data and everything is okay. That'll give you an hour while the pilot refuels in Fairbanks. You can take the other plane out there and get away."

"Was it buried in snow at the base of the pier? Someone already dug it up." said Tiny, not looking at him. "Clay, can you do it?"

Skip's jaw dropped as he fell back against the wall. He shook his head in disbelief.

"Dug up?" Clay began to chuckle, the pain leaving him with each heartbeat. "He's okay! He dug it up!" He laughed. "He's okay!"

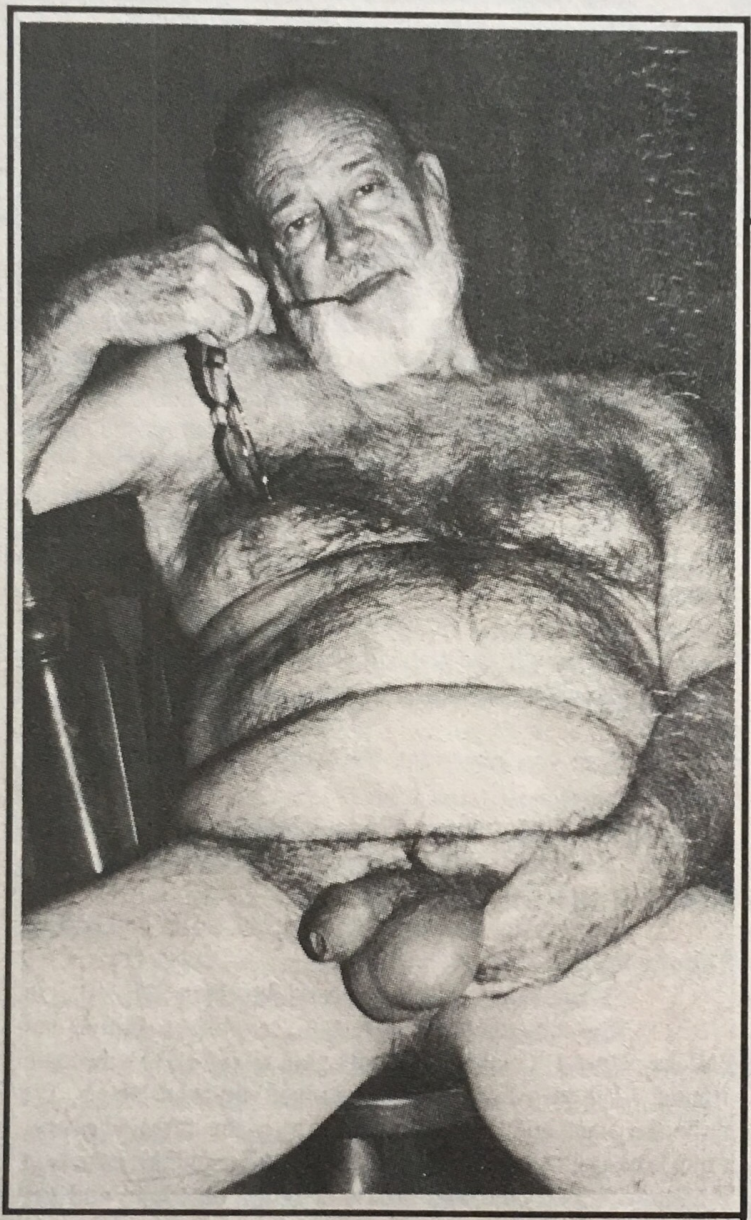
"Can you radio the plane?" Tiny shook him.

Clay saw immense intelligence and danger in Tiny's face. "He said, 'Eagle to Blackbird,' and . . . let's see . . . I'm Houston and Alex is . . . is . . . the Cat!"

"Good boy." Tiny fired once, hitting Skip in the forehead, killing him instantly.

[Continued on page 68]

MATURE AND HOT

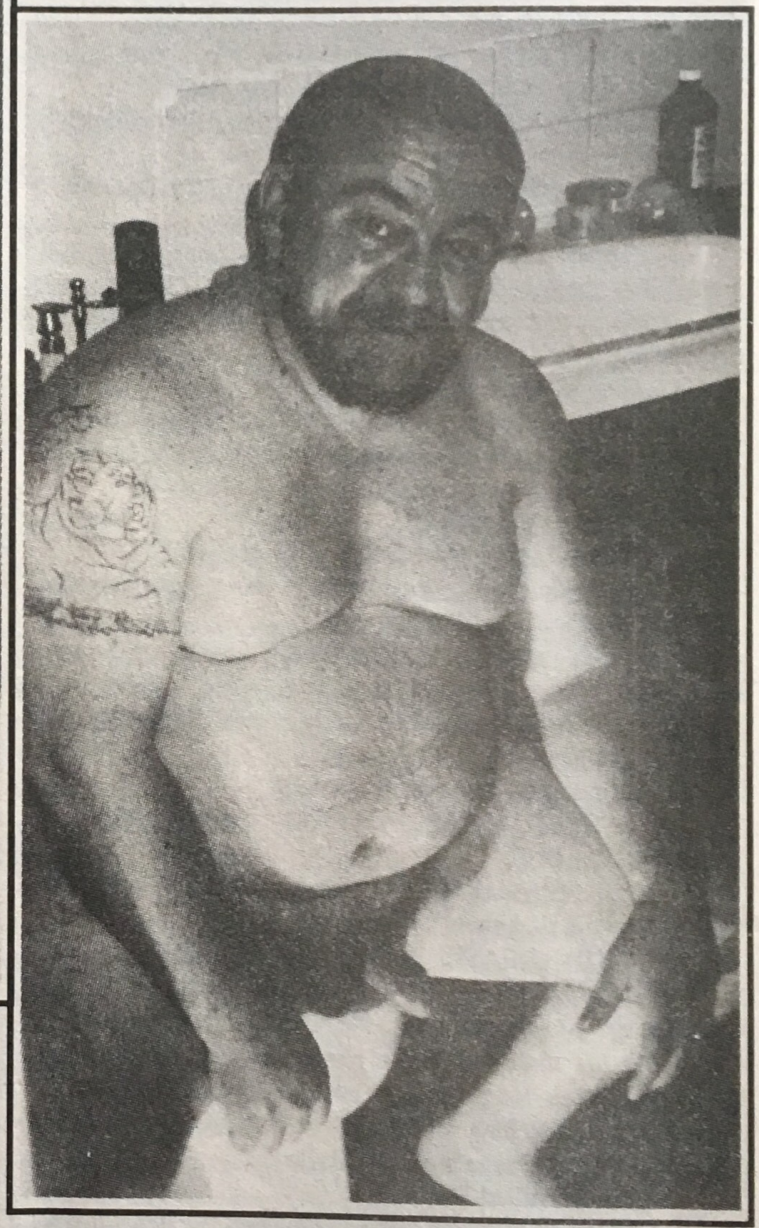


THE COLONEL . . . photo by KENT JUSTICE

The above big, brawny, hairy, bull-balled specimen is the 60ish lover of KENT JUSTICE. He and Kent live on the Gulf Coast near New Orleans.

URSUS MINOR . . . photo by AARON

The pro-wrestler type below is 46, 5'-7", 230# and lives in Los Angeles. He's a lover of Big Bears who are heavyset, 45 and older.



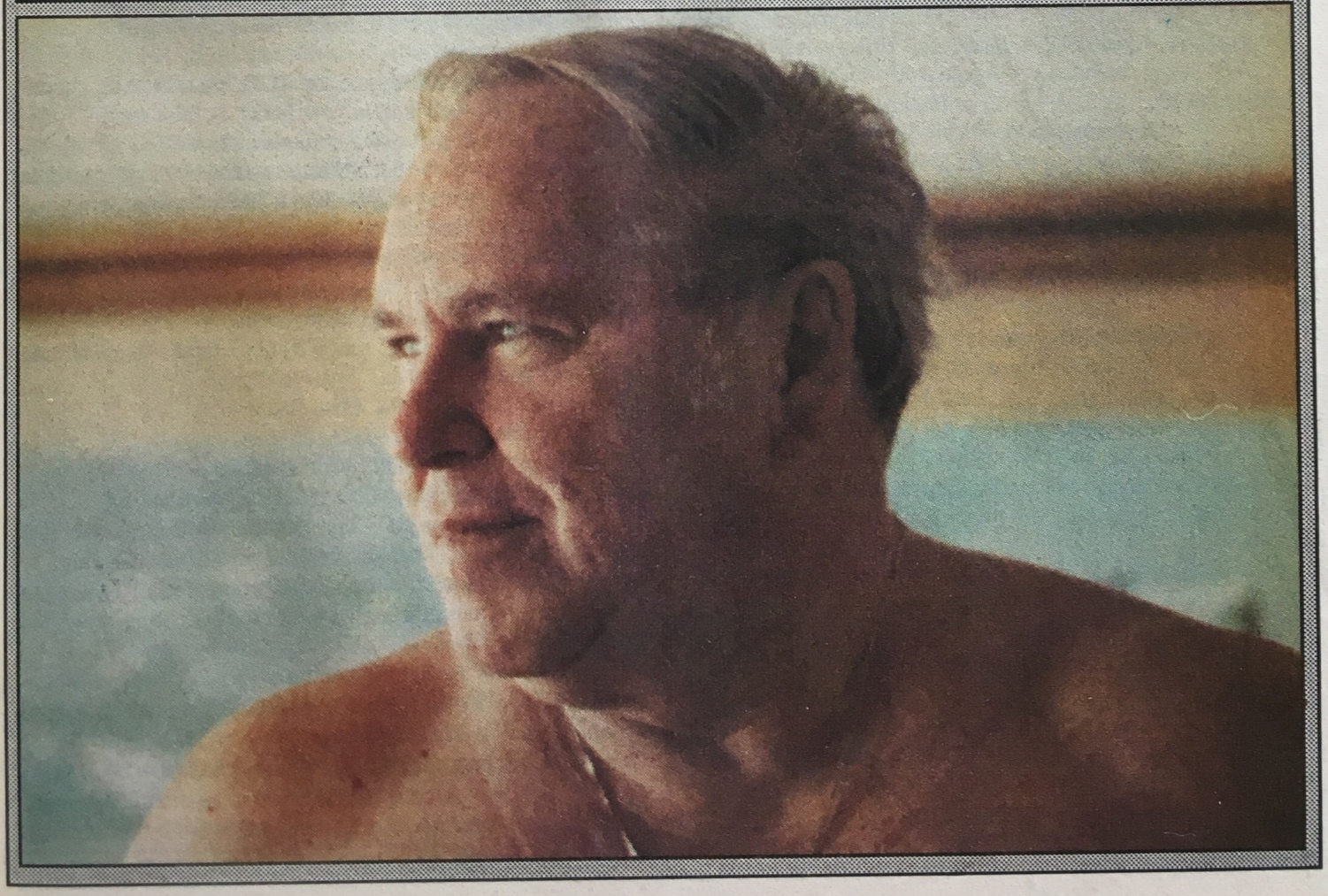
NEXT PAGE . . . . . .

UPPER LEFT: HORNBLOWER . . . photo by P.H. COLLEY He's a 36-year-old, 5'-10", 200# musician from Las Vegas who's into long distance bicycling and skiing (water and snow). He likes senior men with facial hair, silver heads and uncut equipment.

UPPER RIGHT: THE BIKER . . . photo by KENT JUSTICE At 67, he's a rugged, outdoors type who retired from the construction industry and now lives in the Florida panhandle. He enjoys the company of masculine, younger men who can relate to a mature guy.

BOTTOM: BIG MAC . . . photo by P.H. COLLEY This 62-year-old, blond, blue-eyed, burly biker lives in Orange County, California with his 35-year-old, blond, biker lover, who is straight off the cover of a surfer magazine.

DOHC
4-VALVE



Clay stared into Skip's glazed eyes.

An engine on Tiny's airplane turned over, chugging, finally dying.

Tiny ran to the door and bolted outside.

"NO!" yelled Clay, staggering to the doorway. Still in pain, he found his parka and struggled down the stairway.

Tiny, hiding behind trees, worked his way through the deep snow toward the uncovered plane, his rifle trained on it. Carefully, he walked to a clump of trees between the lake and the cabin, then stopped, turning to scan 360 degrees. He leaned backwards against the trees, finally dropping to a squat position.

The silence was jarred by the sound of the Magnum's hammer being clicked back. Alexei held the gun to Tiny's head and slowly moved around the trees.

"NO, ALEX!" Clay roared, running through the snow toward the two men.

"I want to know what you know," said Alexei.

Clay stood twenty feet away, bending over in pain. "Please, no, Alex."

Alexei held up his hand to silence Clay. "Well?"

"What gave me away?" asked Tiny.

"You called me Dmitri."

Tiny appeared indignant. "I did not!" He furrowed his brow, then closed his eyes tightly. "Oh, shit!"

"That was your only mistake. Otherwise, brilliant. My hat goes off to you."

"Bold, huh?" said Tiny.

"Insane is more like it."

Tiny rolled his eyes up in an attempt to see Alexei. "It worked . . . up to a point. I was assured that you never killed innocents, so I figured I'd be innocent."

Clay inched closer, the pain overridden by anxiety and confusion.

"You were my shadow on the Slope. You followed me when I flew down here to case the place, didn't you?" Alexei closed his eyes briefly. "Damn! I should have known." He pulled the pistol away and gestured with it. "Back to the house."

Tiny stood and walked past Clay, smiling bittersweetly.

Holding the Magnum on Tiny, Alexei held Clay with one arm, kissing him lightly on the side of his face. "You okay?"

Clay nodded sadly.

Inside, Clay sat at the kitchen table, staring down at the floor. Tiny sat, tied in a chair, looking absently at Skip's body as Alexei sat behind him, the pistol pointed at the back of his head.

"The plane is coming back over soon, Alexei," said Clay. "If we don't contact it, there'll probably be more of them dropping down."

Alexei looked at the radio, now on the floor. "Do you know what to say?"

"Yes," said Clay flatly.

"Okay, then, you handle it." Alexei prodded Tiny with the pistol. "You . . . . Talk. I want to know the whole setup."

Tiny sighed deeply, shuddering. "Well . . . . I was the only agent assigned to you on the Slope. I was just supposed to watch your flank. To the Kremlin, you could do no wrong, so I was told to allow you to run your own show. When you leased the plane, I became suspicious and put a transmitter on it, then followed you here. Later, I figured it was part of your escape route. So did our boss." He glanced at Clay, who purposely looked away. "Then I noticed that the Americans were following you, so I got ready to get you out. That's when you really blew my mind with that disguise and flying off into the fucking sunset with Clay. Anyway . . . " He glanced at Clay again, holding his gaze for a moment.

Clay felt a powerful attraction to him in spite of the fact that he was with the KGB. He became lost in the man's eyes, finally looking away as Alexei followed Tiny's gaze.

" . . . Anyway, we assumed that you'd either destroyed or still had the data. We knew that Clay was set up by the CIA and that you were capable of convincing him of that fact. A love affair wasn't entirely unexpected. And all along, the brass feared that you'd lose your edge some day and want to bow out, so we began to have doubts about your motives to come here." He struggled to see Alexei. "Could I possibly look at the man I'm talking to? This is really very intimidating."

"Keep talking," ordered Alexei.

Tiny shrugged. "After you checked out the cabin, they came in and set everything up. This cabin hasn't been used in years. The owner died." He turned to look at Clay again.

Clay had become depressed.

Tiny looked concerned. "We planted a transmitter in the top of a tree out there. I signaled once every twenty-four hours."

"While you were tied up?" Alexei was incredulous.

Tiny nodded smugly.

"Never underestimate the KGB," said Alexei, chuckling. "Where the fuck is it, in your boot? A false tooth?"

The plane returned for another pass. Clay stood, his face ashen. He took two deep breaths and rushed to the radio as Alexei and Tiny looked on. He held it under the lamp, studying it. Sighing, he pushed the talk button, imagining the timbre of Skip's voice. "Eagle to Blackbird. Over."

Silence, as the sound of the plane grew louder.

"Eagle to Blackbird," Clay said, stronger.

"Blackbird! Go!" said T.J. high above them. "I can barely hear you."

"We have the data. Over."

"I didn't copy, Eagle."

"We have the data!" yelled Clay.

"I'll be right down," said T.J. "Over and out."

"Out," mumbled Clay, his hands trembling. He looked at the two KGB agents, both of whom were smiling.

The horizon had turned dark orange; they could see the airplane dropping through a dark cloud, drifting down toward the ice-covered lake.

Clay and Alexei hid behind trees fifty feet apart, near the lake's edge, studying the twin engine airplane on its approach. It was equipped with skis.

Alexei inspected the AK47 in his hands.

Clay looked down at his own automatic weapon. "Sure is mean looking. You could cut someone in two with

this."

"Don't shoot unless you have to." Alexei watched as the plane touched down on the ice and reversed engines. As the plane rushed down the length of the lake, he crouched.

Clay did likewise, looking back at the cabin, pining over Tiny.

The airplane came to a stop one hundred yards from the pier, and the engines shut down. A door opened and a ladder descended to the ice. A lone man, dressed in a fur-fringed parka, walked down the ladder and slipped on the ice. He struggled to his feet and closed the door.

Alexei raised the gun sight to his eye and steadied himself against the tree. As the man reached the shore line, he yelled, "Freeze!"

T.J. walked through the doorway, his hands locked behind his parka.
Tiny, still securely tied to a chair, greeted him. "Hey, more hostages! You know, misery just *loves* company."

"Stand facing the wall," ordered Alexei, nodding to Clay.

As T.J. obeyed, Clay pulled the man's parka off and took a hunting knife and pistol from inside his belt. He grabbed a chair and pushed it next to T.J. "Sit!"

T.J. turned and looked at Clay with disgust. "You."

Clay roughly pushed T.J. down into the chair then pulled him back by his hair. Alexei reached inside a drawer and pulled out a length of rawhide, throwing it to Clay.

"CIA, I presume," said Tiny cheerfully. "I'm KGB and I'll bet that this has never been done before."

Clay tied T.J.'s hands and feet to the chair, then turned the chair so T.J. could face Alexei.

T.J. glanced at Skip's body, then tightly closed his eyes.

Clay poured himself a double whiskey and sat at the kitchen table. His hands trembled.

Tiny smiled at T.J. "Killing's a bitch, isn't it? And it never stops, does it?" He looked back at Alexei, who was staring at him. "So, what are we doing now? Do I bid against the CIA for the data?"

"I don't know yet. I'm exploring my options." Alexei alternately studied T.J. and Tiny.

"Do you really have any?" asked Tiny.

"T.J.?" said Alexei.

T.J. slowly turned to acknowledge Alexei.

"We're dealing now. Would you like to participate?"

"What do you want?" asked T.J., glancing at Alexei, then glaring at Clay.

"In return for the data and this monster here who single-handedly wiped out your entire team, what do you offer?"

T.J. turned his glare from Clay to Tiny. "Whatever you want," he said at length.

"My bid," blurted Tiny, contemptuous of T.J.'s hatred. "We'll let you live in return for the data and this asshole. T.J. ought to be worth a couple of hundred bucks, no?"

T.J. bristled with hostility.

"I'm dead serious, guys," said Alexei. "Fuck with me and I'll leave both of you here to freeze to death and take my chances with another country."

Clay gulped his drink down and poured another, looking forlornly at Tiny.

"Come with me to Fairbanks," said T.J., "and we'll talk to Jackson. I can get you enough money to live on and get you into the federal witness protection program."

"Bull shit!" yelled Clay, startling the others. "I trusted you cocksuckers before and look what happened."

T.J. was defensive. "And *what* happened? *You're* the one who ran off with the enemy. We lived up to our end of the bargain and put the money in your Swiss bank account."

Tiny howled with laughter. "Oh, spare me! If you did, it would be the first time!"

Clay chuckled at Tiny, then glanced at Alexei, who attempted to hide a grin.

"Could you provide proof, *before* we transferred the data? And how about assurances for our safety?" asked Alexei.

"You leave me here and take my plane to Fairbanks," said T.J. "I'll give you Jackson's telephone number. You can make the deal with him."

"Some assurances," said Clay, looking for Tiny's approval and receiving it.

"Okay," countered T.J. "We get more people into the loop. The Justice Department, whatever. We'd be fools to try and double-cross you."

Alexei considered the offer and slowly looked at Tiny. "Your turn, Tiny."

"What time is it?" asked Tiny nonchalantly.

Alexei looked at his watch. "Eleven forty-five. Why?"

"Twenty-four hours is up in fifteen minutes."

"And?"

"I have no intention of signalling again unless you agree to a deal. If there's no signal, they come."

"What signal?" asked T.J.

"I don't have to remind you that you have few alternatives," continued Tiny. "Kill me and they'll send more until they find you. Sell the data and they'll send hundreds. You know that."

"What fucking signal?!" shouted T.J.

Clay felt that this suddenly serious warning was directed at him, as if he held the power of intervention. He felt a powerful attunement with Tiny. He trusted Tiny.

"Bakumov and Sosnovo are less than ten miles away," Tiny said, almost in a whisper.

Alexei looked up at the ceiling and shook his head, biting his lip.

"Remember them?"

"Yes," answered Alexei, at length. He buried his face in his hands, his Magnum pressed against his cheek. "Jesus Christ."

"Deal, Alexei!" shouted Clay, standing. "It's our only way."

Alexei was startled. For the first time since Clay had met him, he projected confusion and fear. Slowly, he turned to Tiny. "Okay."

T.J. slumped in the chair, his face pale. "Oh, my

God."

Alexei untied the heavy man and watched as he pressed his heel into the floor.

"I just signaled them," said Tiny, kneeling to pick up Skip's automatic weapon, warily watching Alexei's Magnum.

Both Clay and Alexei tensed briefly.

Tiny got into his insulated coveralls and original parka, strapping the gun over his shoulder. "Since there's no computer here, I think it's safe to assume that there are no other copies of the data. Right?"

Alexei nodded.

"I offer the same deal he did." Tiny nodded toward T.J. "Only I'll stand behind it." He held out his hand.

Alexei turned pale and pulled the diskette out of his pocket, handing it to Tiny.

The giant KGB agent walked to the door and turned. "I'll be back in less than an hour." He smiled at Alexei, then at Clay. "Be ready to go, all three of you." He walked out into the snow.

"GODDAMN YOU!" shouted T.J. at Clay. "I hope you rot in HELL!"

Alexei and Clay sat on the pile of animal pelts, looking at the pot stove. Alexei checked the time.

"How long has it been?" asked Clay.

"It's been an hour and a half." Alexei sighed heavily.

Clay looked at T.J., now sitting mutely on the floor, his hands bound behind him.

The faint sound of an airplane reached them and both men bolted upward. They rushed to the window and looked out. Tiny's airplane was landing on the lake.

Alexei fetched the white parkas and gave Clay his. "Ready?"

"As I ever will be."

"Could be a trap, you know."

Clay smiled. "It won't be."

"Well, we'll find out soon enough."

They helped T.J. up and dressed him in his parka, pushing him through the doorway. Descending the snow-covered stairs, the three men walked to the pier.

The airplane taxied and a door opened. Tiny waved. "Let's go!"

Tiny landed the plane on a frozen lake ten minutes away and taxied in front of a small cabin, next to two other aircraft. Clay scanned the perimeter of the lake and saw that there were at least eleven other cabins—all apparently vacant.

Tiny blindfolded T.J. and nodded for Clay and Alexei to get out. Helping T.J. to the ice, he closed the door. "Lead him to the cabin. I'm not supposed to trust you." He chuckled.

Alexei and Clay grabbed T.J. by the arms and led him into the cabin.

Two somber-looking middle-aged men were standing on either side of the door, pistols drawn but down. The older of the two, a short, stocky man with close-cropped, grey hair, spoke rapidly in Russian. The other man, a short, wiry man with salt and pepper hair, turned Clay around and took off his parka, quickly searching him. Finding no weapon on Clay, he did the same to T.J., finally throwing both men's coats into a corner. The wiry man mumbled something in Russian.

Alexei turned to them. "Take T.J. to the couch. Just sit and don't let anything upset you, okay?"

Clay complied and sat with T.J., watching as the wiry man searched Alexei.

Taking Alexei's Magnum, the man gestured toward a dining table, where all four KGB agents finally sat. They entered into a spirited conversation in Russian.

Clay was intrigued by the sound of such an exotic language coming from the mouths of the two men he thought he knew so well. He began to feel depressed as those men now looked less familiar. He heard Tiny call the older man "Bakumov," so he studied the faces of the two other Russians with the names supplied. Suddenly, Clay wondered why he'd not been blindfolded.

Bakumov was ruggedly handsome with freshly cut hair and ruddy complexion. His eyes were ice blue. Sosnovo, more plain-looking than Bakumov, wore glasses and had dark brown eyes. Clay imagined that Sosnovo was probably a very effective spy because he was so nondescript.

Clay's attention turned to Bakumov, who did most of the talking. He fantasized sucking the dominant Russian's cock as the others looked on.

"Does it all come home to you now?" asked T.J., his voice filled with hatred and disgust.

"It came home to me when I realized that you'd fucked me." Clay slid away from T.J.

"Do you have any fucking idea what you've done?"

"Saved my ass, for one thing."

T.J. chuckled bitterly. "You're a fucking traitor, man."

Clay yawned, wondering when he would be able to get some sleep. "Keep it up, T.J., and I'll blind side you."

"You have no future, no country now."

No future, no country. My future is in the hands of Bakumov, obviously—my country, wherever Alexei and I end up. Where will we find our sanctum? In a house somewhere in Siberia? In a pine box in Alaska? In my family plot in Weatherford? Here lies a traitor.

Alexei raised his voice and slammed his fist on the table. Tiny placed his hand on Alexei's arm, calming him. Clay realized that something had gone wrong.

"What's happening?" asked T.J.

"I don't know, but if I were you, I wouldn't bank on getting out of this alive just yet."

The mood eventually became more conciliatory and a smile came to Bakumov's lips. Tiny spoke slowly—*carefully?*— looking from Bakumov to Alexei. Finally, all four men stood and Alexei shook Bakumov's hand.

Alexei approached Clay, who stood. "Well, we kissed and made up, but Bakumov has a boss in Moscow. I have to convince him next . . . without Tiny's help."

"Where is Tiny going?" The heartache and anxiety were obvious.

"This is his last mission. He's retiring." Alexei seemed to read Clay's feelings. "I understand that he's leaving the Soviet Union."

The heartache came with a vengeance.

Clay sat in the back seat of Sosnovo's plane, his hands cuffed in back. T.J. sat next to him, still blindfolded. Clay watched as Alexei and Sosnovo got into the front of the plane, then gazed at Tiny, who was standing in front of the cabin, talking to Bakumov. Tiny slightly nodded to Clay.

Acknowledging my thoughts? I fell in love with you, Tiny. I surely don't know why, but I did.

Sosnovo started the engine and taxied to the center of the lake. As the plane took off, Clay looked back at Tiny, whose expression seemed to mirror his own feelings. He felt a hand touch his knee and looked around at Alex, who gave him a keep-your-chin-up wink. Clay smiled, wishing to convince Alexei that all was well. But inside, he felt empty.

Airborne, Sosnovo made contact with the Fairbanks airport in perfect English, having earlier filed a flight plan. They flew by Mt. McKinley and bypassed Anchorage, heading out toward the Aleutians. Minutes later, Sosnovo landed on the lagoon of a small island, taxying up to a pier. A fishing boat was approaching the pier.

After Alexei helped Clay and T.J. off the plane, it immediately taxied out for another takeoff, making room for the fishing boat. Three dark-complexioned men in heavy clothing appeared on the deck and pulled T.J. aboard, then did the same with Clay. Finally, Alexei came aboard and the boat headed out to sea.

Clay was blindfolded, taken below and placed in a small closet-like enclosure. He repeatedly called out for Alexei, but there was only silence. Curling up on the floor, he slept.

FIFTEEN

Three Days Later

Clay had been fed stale bread and strange-tasting water three different times, but he had no idea how long he'd been in the enclosure. He'd vomited once due to motion sickness and urinated three times in his pants. His colon felt compacted; intestinal cramps kept him in agony as his body struggled to void waste.

While dreaming of being abandoned on an atoll as Alexei and Tiny sailed off together in a catamaran, he was jarred awake. Soon he heard voices and the door opened. A man with rough hands grabbed his arm and dragged him out, shouting something in Russian. Ascending to the smell of sea air, he called out for Alexei.

"I'm here," said Alexei languidly.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes. Don't talk now, please."

Clay was roughly taken off the boat and placed in the back of a truck, which travelled along a rough road for several minutes. Soon, he began to hear traffic noises as the truck made frequent stops.

"Alexei?" Clay whispered.

"Don't talk," Alexei whispered back emphatically, obviously irritated.

The truck stopped and Clay was helped out onto a hard surface. He heard the sounds of jet and propeller aircraft and assumed that he was at an airport. He was led to a stairway and helped up into the cabin of an airplane. Someone spoke in Russian.

"Sit here, Clay," said Alexei, gently guiding him into a seat and attaching the seat belt for him.

The jet aircraft took off and Clay fell asleep from weakness.

Several hours later, the aircraft landed roughly, causing Clay to awaken. He was ushered off the aircraft and into an automobile, whereupon he fell asleep again.

"Clay? Wake up." It was Alexei.

Clay opened his eyes and found that the blindfold had been taken off. The car was inside an underground garage and three dour-faced men stood on a curb waiting for him to get out. T.J. sat next to him, looking vacantly out of the other side of the car. One of the men took Clay's arm and pulled him out of the car, leading him through an automatic door which was manned by a uniformed guard. Clay looked back and saw that another man was escorting T.J. through the same door. Looking beyond, he saw Alexei getting into the car with the third man. The car moved away.

"Alexei? Alexei!"

The man grabbed Clay's hair and jerked him around, pulling out a handful of hair

"ALEXEEEEEEIIIIIIII!"

Clay sat in an uncomfortable chair, his hands tied behind him with a plastic wrist restrainer. He felt completely adrift in a hostile environment—a man without a country or friends. Unable to fathom why Alexei had left without a glance, Clay chose not to think of him at all. He tried to think only of things that kept him from sinking into the quicksand of depression. He thought of Bakumov and wondered if the handsome KGB agent would interrogate him like Sosnovo was now trying to do. He fantasized seducing him and sucking his cock in front of the mirror, sure that at least two more KGB personnel were watching from behind it.

The small room was lit by a harsh, powerful light, which made Sosnovo sweat profusely. He dabbed a handkerchief at his forehead. "Do you hear me?"

Clay focused on Sosnovo's lips.

"Either get a hold on yourself or we'll have to take bolder measures." Sosnovo studied Clay. "Cooperate with me now and we'll show you more hospitality."

"I . . . want to see Alexei," mumbled Clay.

"Cooperate and you shall."

"I'm just . . . just tired and . . . I want to be with Alexei."

Sosnovo was eager. "Where is the disk?"

Clay blinked, dumbfounded. "I beg your pardon?"

"The disk you gave us was blank. Where is the disk with the data?"

Clay dumbly shook his head, stunned by the potential consequences. "Alexei gave you the disk I found."

"You switched the disks, didn't you?"

Clay stared into the mirror, wondering who was looking back at him.

An hour later, two uniformed guards noisily entered the room and roughly grabbed him, prodding him down a bleak hallway with clubs. His bowels groaned as the compaction in his colon began to break up. A backup of gas marauded through his intestines, doubling him over with sharp pain.

Clay was pushed through a labyrinth of cold, grey halls until he arrived at a double door leading to a courtyard. Three wooden, utility-sized posts had been buried in the gravel-covered earth, leaving six feet sections above ground. At the wall behind the posts, there had been erected a thick wooden backdrop.

As Clay was led to the middle post, he looked closer at the backdrop and saw that it was riddled with bullet holes. His face turned slack and he felt faint. He bent over until the feeling went away, then slowly straightened up, frantically trying to figure out how to escape. But there was no more time. His wrists were unbound, then bound again around the post.

Sosnovo appeared before him. "We broke Alexei. He told us everything. We therefore don't need you." He briskly walked away.

Three soldiers armed with automatic rifles marched into the courtyard from the other side and halted thirty feet in front of Clay.

Stunned, Clay looked on as the soldiers obeyed the order in Russian to ready, aim, then fire. He closed his eyes and heard a barrage of shots.

The smell of gunpowder wafted over him and he slowly opened his eyes.

More orders were barked in Russian; the soldiers ordered their arms and marched out of the courtyard. Shamelessly, Clay defecated in his pants.

Allowed to clean himself, Clay sat inside a small cell, a serene smile on his face. He was sailing in the nude on a yacht off the coast of Fiji. Tiny, also nude, ascended from the main cabin and stood behind Clay, enveloping him with massive arms. Tiny's fat cock teased its way to the gateway of Clay's sphincter.

The cell door opened and a silhouette filled the doorway.

Clay dreamily regarded the visitor, frowning as his fantasy was dispelled.

"Show and tell," said Alexei, sitting on the small bed next to Clay.

Clay shook his head in disbelief, finally embracing the Russian. But it soon became obvious that Alexei wasn't responding. Clay pulled back and searched the big man's cold, green eyes.

"Where is the data, Clay?" Alexei's voice had changed. It was void of warmth.

"I gave it to you, Alexei." Clay inched further away.

"Serious, okay?" Alexei's voice now seemed alien. "This is very serious business, Clay."

"Isn't it, though," whispered Clay bitterly. "What's going on, Alexei? I gave you the diskette I found. That's all I know."

Alexei raised his hand and measured with his index finger and thumb. "We're this far away from execution."

The location of the diskette suddenly streaked into Clay's mind.

Alexei buried his face in his hands, sighing wearily. "Clay, we're dead meat unless you tell them where the original diskette is."

"I know where it is," Clay said softly.

Alexei slowly looked up. "Where?"

"Tiny was gone an hour and a half, not less than an hour, like he promised. Remember?"

Alexei's mouth opened involuntarily.

"He could have flown into Fairbanks, bought a blank diskette and mailed the real one any place in the world." In spite of his feeling that he would be dead in minutes, Clay felt proud of Tiny's ingenuity.

"Why would he do that?" asked Alexei, incredulous.

The door flew open. "Why indeed would he do that?" barked Bakumov, holding a pistol to Alexei's head.

Clay looked into Alexei's eyes, watching as his expression drained of spirit. He looked like a condemned man and Clay expected that his own expression looked the same.

"Where is the diskette?" asked Bakumov, his voice filled with rancor.

Clay shook his head. "Tiny has it."

"Rubbish! Tell me NOW!" shouted Bakumov, his face dark with fury, his neck veins bulging.

"Tiny has it," Clay mumbled.

Bakumov's expression altered slightly, as if he had just realized something quite profound. He smiled, exposing irregular, stained teeth. "You fetched a blank disk from your office, didn't you?"

Clay shook his head.

"You fooled Alexei, didn't you? He told you it was a standard, three and a half microdisk. It was your ticket off the slope . . . ."

"Idiot," growled Alexei, his nostrils flaring. "Can't you see that he's not that clever?" He gestured toward Clay in disgust. "He was in the airport, on his way to Anchorage. He had no idea I would be there." He spat something obviously insulting in Russian.

Bakumov's eyes narrowed.

A sharp knock came to the door, prompting Bakumov to abruptly leave.

Clay leaned back against the wall and sighed.

Alexei buried his face in his hands. "He's so fucking stupid."

"He's holding the gun."

Alexei chuckled bitterly. "Tiny . . . . Tiny, Tiny, Tiny. How brilliant."

"What happens next?" asked Clay, wishing that Alexei would hold him one last time.

Alexei shook his head forlornly. "What do you *think*, Clay. It's *over*, for crissakes. Curtain's coming down."

Clay felt himself falling into a vortex of sand going through an hourglass. It occurred to him that he'd never allowed the visualization of dying. Even though he'd had several vivid dreams about dying, he never once sat down and philoso-

phized over it. He wondered why he was still reluctant to think about it, now that it seemed to be imminent.

He inched closer to Alexei and placed his hand on the Russian's knee. "Alexei?"

The Russian glanced at him and leaned back against the wall.

"Did you really fall in love with me?"

Alexei looked at him blankly.

A key entered the lock and Bakumov entered again. His face was flushed and his eyebrows were arched in a wild expression. "We now have a consensus. The whole thing is obviously a sham, but the CIA doesn't know that yet. Therefore, you stay . . ." he said to Clay. " . . . and you go," he said to Alexei.

Even before Clay heard the pistol fire, he saw Alexei's face contort. He closed his eyes tightly, trying to shut out the vision of Alexei's exploding head. Hearing the sound of Bakumov's exit, he opened his eyes and stared disconsolately at Alexei's body on the floor.

SIXTEEN

The Following Morning

Handcuffed, Clay was ushered into the same garage as before. He saw a car with a familiar man sitting in the back seat. Someone opened the door, exposing T.J., now with dark circles under his eyes. Recognizing Clay, the CIA agent turned his head in disgust.

Someone pushed Clay into the back seat and closed the door. Sosnovo got into the passenger side and glanced at the two prisoners in back.

The car sped up a ramp and onto the snow-covered streets of Moscow. The sky was a dark, bleak grey, which matched Clay's frame of mind. It never came to mind to question why he was being moved. So many questions, he thought. *Why am I still alive? Why are T.J. and I together? Why do I feel so strangely calm?*

Minutes later, the driver stopped the car across the street from the American Embassy, prompting T.J. to stammer incoherently.

"Please listen to me, gentlemen," ordered Sosnovo. "We've negotiated a prisoner swap with the Americans. You will both be traded for two of our citizens unjustly accused of espionage."

As Clay's mind reeled, T.J. slowly turned and glared at him. He chuckled venomously and sank gleefully into the seat.

"We await word from Washington, then you will go first." Sosnovo nodded at T.J.

"I don't want to go back," said Clay, his voice dry and brittle. "I'd prefer to die in the Soviet Union."

"Sure, you want to go back, Clay, baby," T.J. cooed.

Clay fell into the seat and kicked T.J.'s chin with both feet, slamming his head into the window. He kicked again and again as the CIA agent yelled out in pain. Blood shot out of T.J.'s mouth and nose and smeared the frosting window.

The driver quickly got out and pulled open the door, pulling T.J. to the snow. Sosnovo opened the door on Clay's side and likewise pulled him out, holding a .45 pistol to his head.

"Okay, okay," soothed Clay. "I'm cool."

"I'm gonna kill him!" yelled T.J., flailing in the snow. "I'm gonna kill that cocksucker!"

Sosnovo glared at Clay. "Don't move!" He ran around the back of the car and stood over T.J., his face covered with blood. "Shut up or the deal is off!"

T.J. looked up at the .45, then went limp and began to whimper.

Sosnovo handed him a handkerchief. "The embassy staff will take care of you. Now get up."

T.J. stood holding the handkerchief to his nose and mouth. He allowed himself to be led to the front passenger seat by the driver, who got back behind the wheel.

Sosnovo sat in the back seat, tapping the seat with his pistol. Clay got in and closed the door, staring at the back of T.J.'s head.

They waited.

Fifty minutes passed and Clay's feet began to numb. T.J. moaned with pain. A cellular phone rang and the driver quickly answered it. He said something in Russian and handed the receiver back to Sosnovo, who spoke briefly, handing the phone back to the driver.

"Is it a go?" asked T.J., glancing back at Clay warily.

"Yes," said Sosnovo. "First you, then Pascal."

Clay watched as Sosnovo escorted T.J. across the street to meet two U.S. Embassy officials, who walked out of the front entrance and opened the gate. T.J. stood next to the two Americans, glaring back at Clay. Tears seemed to explode from his eyes.

Sosnovo walked back to the car and got into the back with Clay. "We wait for the next call."

"Why did Bakumov kill Alexei?" asked Clay flatly.

Sosnovo ignored him.

Clay chuckled. "You know? When the CIA finds out that I don't know diddly shit, they're going to blow my head off. Worse, T.J. is going to have my nuts for lunch. They're going to be pissed that they gave up an important Russian spy for a dip stick like me. Ha!"

Sosnovo glanced at Clay, moderately amused.

"But you know who's going to be pissed the most?" Clay leaned forward for effect. "Bakumov."

Sosnovo glanced back again with a sneer.

"When Bakumov finds out what really happened to the disk, he's going to pop an artery." Clay laughed madly. "I can just see his face as the whole fucking free world starts receiving the data."

Sosnovo smiled and shook his head.

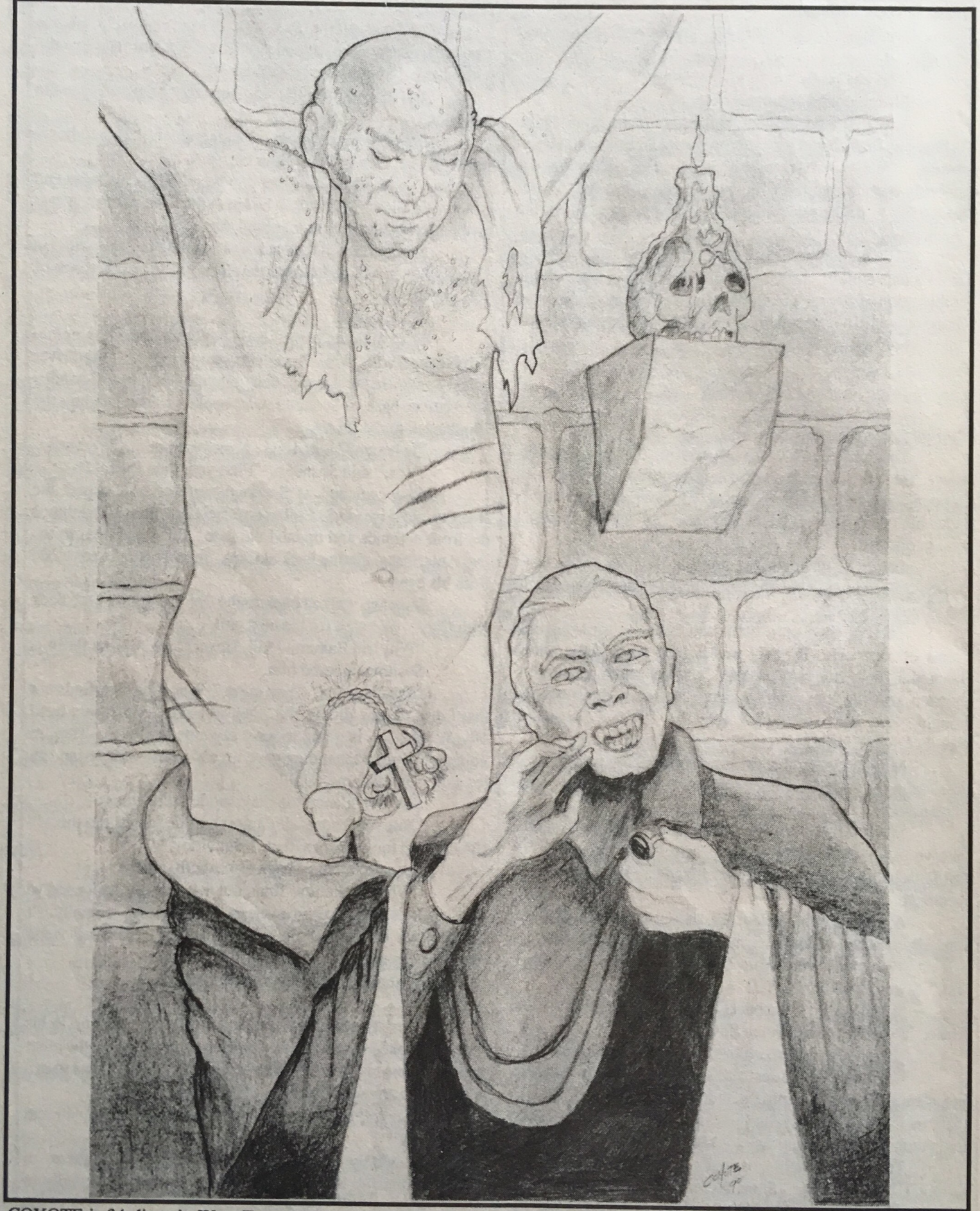
Twenty minutes went by and Clay lost feeling in his feet. He looked across the street and saw that T.J. and the other men had gone inside the embassy. Then he saw T.J.'s torso in a window, an anxious victory smile frozen on his face.

"Something's wrong," said Sosnovo. "They should have called."

Suddenly, a black sedan pulled up behind them; a young man ran to Sosnovo's window. He spoke excitedly in

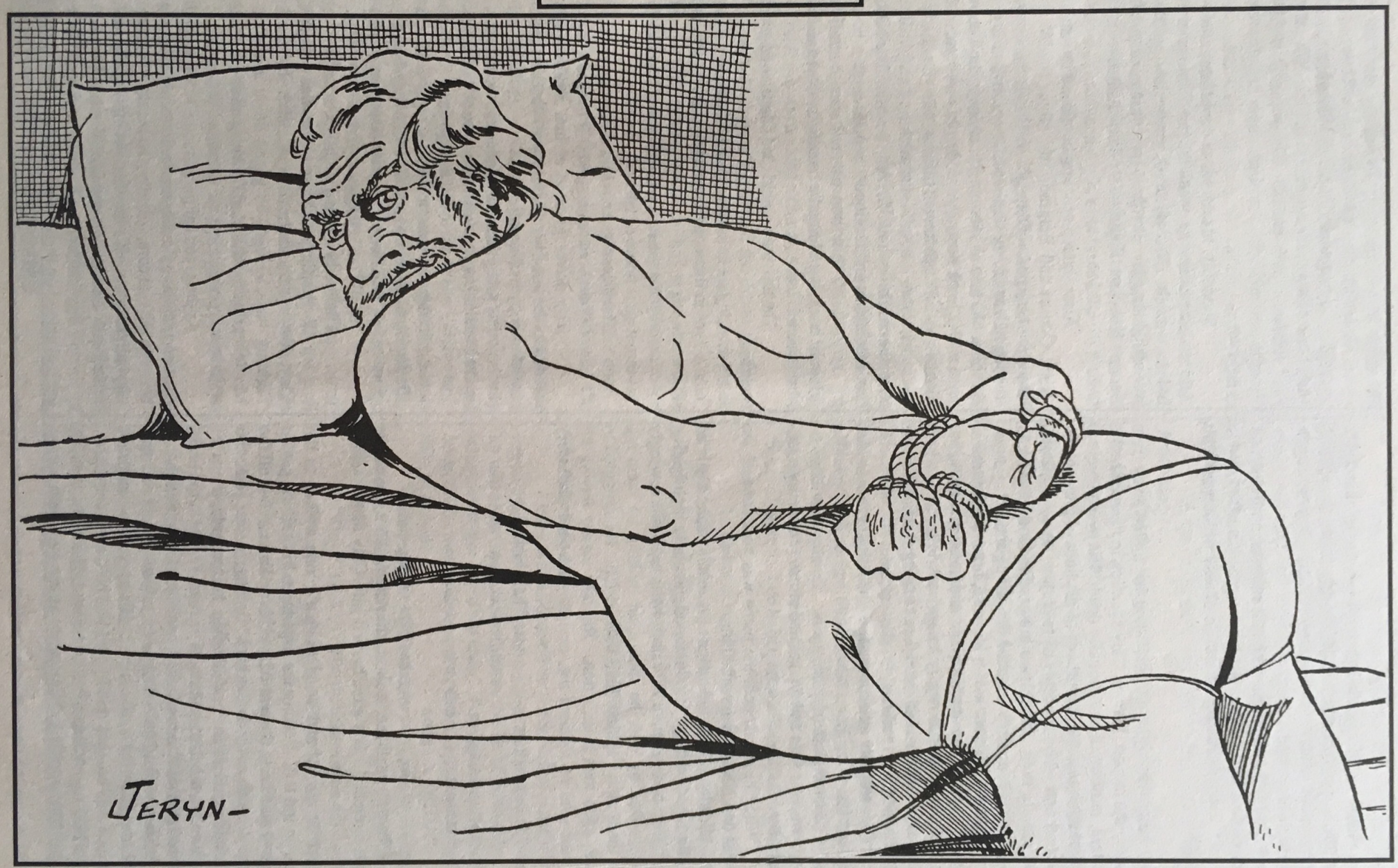
[Continued on page 76]

COUNT SUCKULA SCREAMS WITH RAGE



COYOTE is 34, lives in West Texas and loves straight looking/acting older men . . . but he's open to rapport with anyone serious about their truth.

WAITING FOR THE WHIP



JERYN is a 30-year-old freelance journalist living with a 59-year-old retired engineer in Paris

Russian.

Sosnovo was puzzled by what the young man had to say. After several seconds, he nodded, then rolled the window up, turning to Clay. "Bakumov cancelled your trade. Something's happened."

Clay felt doltish, as if he had suffered a mild stroke. The car moved into traffic and Clay watched indifferently as T.J. went berserk, breaking the front embassy window with his forehead.

Later that night, a black limousine pulled away from the curb at the airport, leaving Clay standing in the snow. He felt listless, indifferent, emotionally dead. His eyes perceived little color and presented a world of bleak hues of grey. Nothing seemed real. The concepts of love, joy, humor—all of it seemed remote now. He felt no hunger for food or drink or touch or sex. He numbly watched the falling snow.

A snow flake settled on his nose, breaking the trance. Slowly, he became aware of the cold and knew that he had to get inside. He looked down at his gloved right hand, which held a fake passport and plane ticket. Lifting the ticket to his eyes, he opened it up and read the destination.

Clay torpidly made his way to the Alitalia counter and checked in. Later, he found himself at the gate, waiting with a strangely silent crowd of passengers. Finally boarding, he found his window seat and envisioned himself inside a protective chamber. Soon he fell asleep.

When he awakened, the plane was airborne and the cabin was dark. Images assaulted him.

In order to keep the image of Alexei's exploding head at bay, he sifted through his childhood, mentally highlighting all the older, heavier men to whom he'd been unknowingly attracted. One by one, he fantasized looking up them all, getting them alone, telling them how he felt. He struggled to fantasize each man's seduction. *Rapture means having all those men who've touched me, excited me—each and every one.*

"But all rapture is gone now," he whispered

No, it isn't! It's around the next corner.

"All love is gone."

No, not so! It's everywhere, inside you.

"All life . . . gone."

If that's so, then why the ticket to Yugoslavia?

Two rows ahead, a short, thin man with a hook nose rose and stretched. His gaze burned into Clay as he walked past, down the aisle.

Clay turned and watched as the man walked to the lavatory on the left. Feeling the urge to go himself, he got up and slowly walked to the rear of the cabin. He searched all the other faces on the way to the back, finding no one else who seemed interested in him. And then he recognized one of guards from his mock execution. The man, sitting in the back, wore tinted glasses and read a newspaper under a dim light.

Clay walked into the other lavatory, urinated and stared at his reflection in the mirror. His eyes were bloodshot and his face was bloated. He looked like he'd aged ten years.

Heading back to his seat, he studied the one reading the newspaper, quickly looking away as the man glanced up. Near his seat, his gaze met that of the thin man with the hook nose. Again the man's eyes burned into his.

Clay attempted to rationally grasp what was happening, but nothing made any sense to him. Why was he released and not executed or traded? Why was he being followed by at least two men? Why the plane ticket to Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia?

Suddenly, his emotions could be contained no longer and he came face to face with the inevitable grief and guilt over Alexei's death. He acquiesced, received the graphic memory of the slaughter. He silently wept, staring out at a beautiful full moon. It was the first time he'd cried since his childhood.

After sixteen grueling hours and intermediate stops at Kiev, Odessa and Belgrade, the flight finally arrived at the Dubrovnik airport. Clay got in line for customs clearance, feeling like an empty shell, indifferent to the intrigue surrounding him. As he was motioned to an inspection counter, the thin man with a hook nose appeared from nowhere, closely following him to the Yugoslavian official. Clay reached for the phony passport; the thin man said something to the official in Serbo-Croatian while flashing his identification. The official searched both their eyes and motioned them through.

As the thin man ushered him toward an exit, Clay glanced back, searching the line for the Russian guard. He had disappeared.

The thin man quickly led Clay to a black sedan parked nearby.

Clay sat in the back seat of the sedan, studying the thin man's eyes in the rear view mirror. They were dark, penetrating, unsettling.

"Where the hell are we headed?" asked Clay, clearing his throat after hours of silence.

The driver ignored him.

"Want your cock sucked?" blurted Clay.

The driver glanced at him indifferently, then proceeded to the outskirts of Dubrovnik, headed southeast toward the Montenegrin Republic.

For what seemed like hours, the driver silently navigated breathtaking curve after curve, obviously by rote. Then, just as Clay was about to fall asleep, the driver began nervously looking in the rear view mirror. He appeared coiled. Finally, Clay looked behind and saw that they were being followed by a green sedan with two men inside. One was the Russian guard.

"KGB?" asked Clay.

The driver nodded slightly.

"I wish the fuck I knew what was going on," mumbled Clay, looking out over the Gulf of Kotor far below them. Fighting back vertigo, he gazed down a cliff at the walled Montenegrin city of Kotor, then gasped as the car lurched down a side road, giving Clay the sensation of soaring over the cliff.

As the green car performed a screaming U-turn above, the thin man had already managed to put a half mile distance between the two cars. Dizzily, the black car descended through one hairpin curve after another, prompting Clay to buckle himself in with the seat belt and shrink into the seat.

Clay ventured a glance behind and saw that the green car had gained on them. He looked ahead and saw that the thin

man was steering toward a monastery, perched atop a steep cliff overlooking Kotor. The city's wall actually scaled the forty-five degree slope and included the monastery in its perimeter. Looming ahead was an old, narrow archway-entrance; Clay shook his head, sensing that the black car was too wide. Suddenly, the car swooped into a dip, momentarily out of sight of the KGB agents, then Clay almost vomited as the car swerved to the left and down another steep side road.

As the car suddenly stopped, a crash sounded above. The thin man backed the car up to the split in the road and smiled, pointing toward the green car, now wedged and burning in the narrow opening. As the two Russians frantically beat out the back window to escape, the thin man turned the car around and sped back up to the highway.

Several minutes later, Clay spotted a sign which read *Ulcinj*. They'd traversed the mountainous coastal section of Montenegro and descended to the lowlands near the Albanian frontier. Slowing down, the thin man drove through the town and turned on to a dirt road, headed toward the Albanian border. Cresting a hill, Clay was astonished by the view of the sun coming out of the clouds over the Adriatic. And then he saw a villa, sitting on a lower hill, surrounded by a stone wall and hundreds of Italian cypress. Gleaming in the sunlight, the house was made of white-washed stone and had a red tile roof. A high redwood fence surrounded a rear area and Clay assumed that there was a pool there.

The car pulled up at a gate and the driver got out to open it. Glancing at Clay and smiling faintly, he got back inside the car and pulled up outside a two-car garage.

Clay got out, stretching and smiling at the view of the sea. He walked to the fence and saw a trail leading down to the beach.

The driver grunted, gesturing toward the front door.

Clay tore himself from the view and followed the driver through the door.

Inside, the walls were white and covered with fine Impressionist paintings. The living room had a cathedral ceiling and plants were positioned and hung dramatically throughout. The floor was made of Italian marble and covered with exquisite Oriental rugs.

The entire opposite wall was made of glass, framing a sliding glass door which overlooked a swimming pool and adjacent spa. Beyond the pool were shrubs and lesser trees than the cypress, rising above the redwood fence.

Clay walked to the sliding glass door and went out to the pool. The air temperature was in the fifties, but the pool looked inviting. He knelt and tested the water, which was heated.

"Are you believing this?" he asked himself.

"No. I think it's a dream, or perhaps a cruel joke," he answered himself.

He went back into the house, finding the kitchen to the right.

It was large and well stocked with expensive copper pots and pans. Shelves filled with cookbooks and kitchen gadgets covered an entire wall. It looked like the kitchen of some exclusive, small French restaurant.

Opening a large refrigerator-freezer, Clay found it stocked with everything from elegant paté to frozen, aged beef. There were eggs, cheeses, fresh vegetables, milk, champagne, exotic condiments and an assortment of fresh fruits, many obviously imported. He looked inside a closet and found a pantry filled with every canned and dried food imaginable, along with wine, beer, soft drinks, liquor, cereals, nuts and flour. The kitchen reeked with good taste and black market.

A car in the driveway started and Clay rushed to the front door.

Closing the gate behind him, the thin man drove toward Ulcinj.

Now what?

Clay walked up the stairway to the bedrooms. The guest bedroom contained a queen size bed and was lavishly decorated in a blue and green motif. The master bedroom contained a king size bed and was decorated in oranges, yellows and greens. The walls were covered with expensive fabric; tropical plants were everywhere.

Clay noticed a photograph on a dresser and inspected it. It was a picture of a sweet-looking, middle-aged woman. He looked inside a heavy chest-of-drawers for more photos, more clues to the puzzle. Finding nothing but undergarments, he checked one of two closets, discovering the expensive wardrobe of a large man. The other closet contained a woman's wardrobe, complete with elegant and costly gowns, wigs and shoes. Unable to shed light on the mystery, he went downstairs to the kitchen.

As darkness came, he prepared a meal in the kitchen while drinking three large martinis. After dinner, he drank half a bottle of brandy while watching Yugoslavian television.

Finally, he nodded off in the chair, sleeping fitfully.

SEVENTEEN

The Following Morning

Clay was awakened by the sound of a car motor, followed by the sound of an opening gate. The garage door rolled up and a car entered the garage. Cold and hung over, Clay struggled to get out of the chair. Turning off the television set, he stood facing the doorway to the garage, expecting the thin man to appear.

Tiny appeared in the doorway, smiling broadly, then frowning. "Oh, my God, you've lost weight. What did they do to you?"

"Tiny?" choked Clay, disbelieving.

"Yes," Tiny said softly. He tentatively reached out for Clay, who took a step backwards.

Clay shook his head, his mind searching for motives, reasons, consequences. "You switched the disk."

Tiny sighed, his expression darkening. "Yes."

"Why?" Clay studied the big man, his stomach muscles knotting with mounting stress. Part of him wanted to become lost in Tiny's arms, but his objective self urged caution, in spite of the fact that Tiny had obviously arranged for his freedom.

"I'll tell you everything in due time." His expression grave, Tiny reached out again, but Clay stepped back. "Did

they hurt you?"

"They killed Alexei." Clay chanted.

Tiny's expression didn't change.

"You knew," accused Clay.

Tiny sat in a chair, obviously exhausted. "I've been through hell and I'm tired." He took off his huge shoes. "There's much to be said. I know how confused and paranoid you must be. My driver, Stojan, tells me that you had a final bout with the KGB on your way here." He looked compassionately at him. "I know how much you must hurt." He rubbed his eyes wearily. "But I'm not your enemy." He rose and turned for the stairs. "I'm going to take a shower, then I'm going to bed. I've got a bad case of jet lag." He slowly climbed the stairway, glancing back. "You can stay or take your chances with nothing but a fake Russian passport."

Hearing the big man moving about upstairs, Clay made a pot of coffee. Pouring a cup, he walked into the living room and sat on the couch, gaping up at the ceiling. He allowed himself the fantasy of showering with Tiny, only to watch the vision fade as Alexei's ghost surfaced again.

"No!" commanded Clay, bringing the fantasy back, seeing himself scrubbing Tiny's back, feeling the icy caress of Alexei's grey corpse.

Clay's hands violently shook, causing him to drop the cup. He quickly picked it up and ran into the kitchen for paper towels. Mopping up the spill, he threw the towels into the garbage and steadied himself over the kitchen sink. A chill drifted down his back, causing him to gasp and spin around, pushing away a perceived phantom entity. "No!" he yelled, shivering, looking around wildly. "Jesus," he hissed, suddenly rushing for the stairs.

Reaching the top landing, Clay looked in on Tiny, who was asleep in the big bed. Clay smelled the aroma of soap, steam and cologne and realized that his own body wasn't clean.

In the other bathroom, Clay shaved, showered and brushed his teeth. Nude, he walked across the hallway and stood looking down at Tiny, longing to be next to him. He made his way to the bed and gently sat on the edge, watching as Tiny's bloodshot eyes opened.

Without hesitation, Tiny reached for Clay and pulled him into the bed.

Clay lay next to Tiny as he slept. He felt a powerful ambivalence, but clung to Tiny's warm body, terrified that the haunting would never stop. He searched his heart, was assured that he loved the big man. He pored over Tiny's face, wondering what kind of man he really was.

What do I love? The man? The perception? The chemistry?

Near mid-afternoon, Tiny awakened, refreshed. He glanced at Clay and stretched, placing his arms behind his head. "So many questions spinning around in your head. I can almost hear the cacophony." He ran his thick fingers through Clay's hair. "I'm Yugoslavian—actually, ethnic Albanian . . . not Russian. I was with the KGB almost twenty years." He glanced at the photo on the dresser. " I fell in love with a Russian woman, and for eighteen years, we lived in Leningrad." He massaged Clay's scalp. "She died in eighty-one. We secretly bought this place four years ago. It was to be our retirement home. She was a professor of anthropology and was responsible for getting me into the correct circles. When I met her, I was a lieutenant with the Belgrade police. I became an expert on the covert activities of KGB and other European agencies." He chuckled. "I was so effective that the KGB recruited me, mostly using me to monitor other agents." He kissed Clay on the forehead. "That's why Alexei never knew me." He sighed. "I dreaded having to come back here by myself. I knew that there would never be a replacement for Nina. I couldn't bear to bring another woman here." He shook his head and grinned. "Then I experienced Clay Pascal, and the suppressed part of me came screaming back with a vengeance.

"I suppose it's time to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth." Tiny contemplated his toes. "I flew to Fairbanks and bought a package of blank diskettes, then mailed the one with the data to a friend inside the Soviet Union. I then gave one of the blanks to Bakumov."

"Why?"

"Because I knew that Bakumov would turn on both of you. I didn't buy any of it. Bakumov agreed to the whole thing because he wanted to make sure he retrieved the right diskette. Had I given him the real one, both of you would have been executed the next day."

"You did this just to try to save us?" Clay was amazed.

"I did it because of *you*, Clay. I did something very few people would ever attempt: I extorted the KGB. I got through to Bakumov just before you were to be traded to the CIA. I would have done it sooner, but I was still vulnerable until my friend made copies of the diskette and distributed them for safe keeping. Besides, I knew that they wouldn't kill you."

Clay sat up in bed, rubbing his fingers through Tiny's chest hair. "Why are they still following me?"

"They thought you'd lead them to me." He yawned. "It was a stupid, half-hearted attempt. They should have known me better. It's over for now—a stalemate. Besides, they don't know about this place. If the KGB doesn't come for me, I won't mail the duplicates to the other countries. On the other hand, I won't release the information for money, because the KGB would pull out all the stops to find me. The Soviets have invested a fortune in time and money to get those operatives placed as high as they are, so the status quo is what they prefer." Tiny sat up and placed his arm around Clay's shoulder. "You'd do well to abandon the guilt about Alexei. He sold you out, Clay."

Clay turned to him, disbelieving.

"He told Bakumov that he followed you to J Pad the night you found the diskette. He said he didn't close in because a CIA agent was there too. He thought you might have switched the disk later, so he played along."

Clay shook his head in denial. "But he loved me, Tiny .... He . . . loved . . . ."

"No . . . he didn't. The real truth is that he was going to kill you as soon as he could verify the disk this coming spring, then sell the data to the highest bidder. Clay, he's made a career out of feigning love. He was a master at it. Misha's murder did that to him."

Clay slowly got out of bed. As his mind processed the betrayal, he slowly walked down the stairs and out to the pool. He had to be alone.

Stepping into the steaming pool, he swam to the opposite corner. He closed his eyes, playing back all his memories of Alexei. At first, it was impossible to believe Tiny's revelation, but Alexei's image began to tarnish in his mind's eye.

And then it all made sense. Alexei was brilliant from the very beginning. No cat and mouse games for Cheetah—his *modus operandi* was to start off boldly, always using the element of surprise to his advantage. *You were just another person to compromise. He could smell your yin, screaming to burst free—could sense your cum-hunger.*

Alexei didn't need a country. He was his own country. He was a man in love with a ghost by the name of Misha, and he didn't have the capacity to love anyone else. He was obsessed with getting even with the KGB, and in a way, he succeeded.

"Are you there, Alexei? There with Misha?" Clay's eyes misted over. "I forgive you, Alexei. I think I understand."

Slowly, the guilt over Alexei seemed less severe. Even the image of his death seemed less sharp. Clay thought of what might have been and shuddered, vowing never to think of it again. Alexei's memory slipped further into the crevasses of his mind.

He floated on his back and glanced up at an open second floor window. Tiny anxiously stared back at him.

"Feel like a swim?" asked Clay.

"You have a lot of reconciliation to go through," offered Tiny.

"It's over . . . behind me." Clay swam to the edge and pulled himself up into a sitting position, the muscles in his arms and stomach rippling. "Are we banished here?" He panned over the house and grounds.

"For awhile," said Tiny, sitting in the window.

"Will the CIA come for me?"

"If the KGB doesn't know about this place, then for sure the CIA doesn't. As long as we don't start vacationing in Paris or Amsterdam the next couple of years, we should be safe. After a couple of years, it won't make any difference. Changes are coming."

"Changes . . . ." Clay reflected upon the word. "Everything changes, doesn't it?"

"Blows the mind, doesn't it?" Tiny crossed his arms, looking fondly at him.

Clay chuckled. "How many more times will I change, Tiny?"

"Oh, I think it's safe to say that you've found yourself now. You might even decide to settle down and behave yourself."

"I dreamed about you."

"*Did* you?" Tiny smiled, rolling up his eyes.

"When we took off and you were standing there with Bakumov, I felt so empty. The rational Clay Pascal said, 'Well, you'll never see that hunk again,' but my subconscious must have taken issue, huh? Otherwise, why would I've dreamed about you?"

Tiny shrugged playfully. "Tell me about the dreams."

Feeling chilled, Clay slipped back into the pool. "I was on this rocky coast—it was some island—and you and Alexei were sailing away. For some reason, you left me there."

Tiny's expression darkened slightly.

"Another time, I dreamed that you and I were on this sail boat or yacht off the coast of Fiji. We were nude. I think it was a reunion." Clay looked up at him hungrily. "Actually it wasn't a dream. It was a fantasy."

"Nude, huh?" asked Tiny, again playful.

"Like now."

"Like now." Tiny's expression began to smolder.

Clay shuddered. "Could we start our reunion?"

Tiny likewise shuddered. "Perhaps. Are you quite sure you're ready for me?"

Clay brought his rigid cock to the surface.

Like a magnificent, raiding incubus, Tiny appeared at the sliding glass door, his testicles squirming, his cock dark red. He slipped into the shallow end of the pool and waded toward Clay, his lips parted, his eyes, unblinking. Reaching deep water, he submerged, finally surfacing in front of Clay.

He trod water. "Let's re-acquaint ourselves, shall we?" He kissed Clay deeply, pressing his thick cock against the younger man's leg. "I have a shock for you, probably." He nibbled at Clay's ears. "Tiny was a dud. He didn't reciprocate." He slipped under the surface and took Clay's swollen cock into his mouth, finally coming up for air. "My *real* name is Branko, you see, and Branko does *everything*. He does everything *quite well*."

Clay smiled, the nightmare suppressed, behind him. "Well, Branko, does this mean that I can stay awhile?"

"You can stay."

Clay looked at the house, suddenly feeling at home.

"Safe house," said Branko.

"Sanctum," offered Clay.

"Latin, huh? Well, *Pax vobiscum* and *in dulce jubilo* to you, too," chuckled Branko.

"I love you, Branko."

"I know."

THE END

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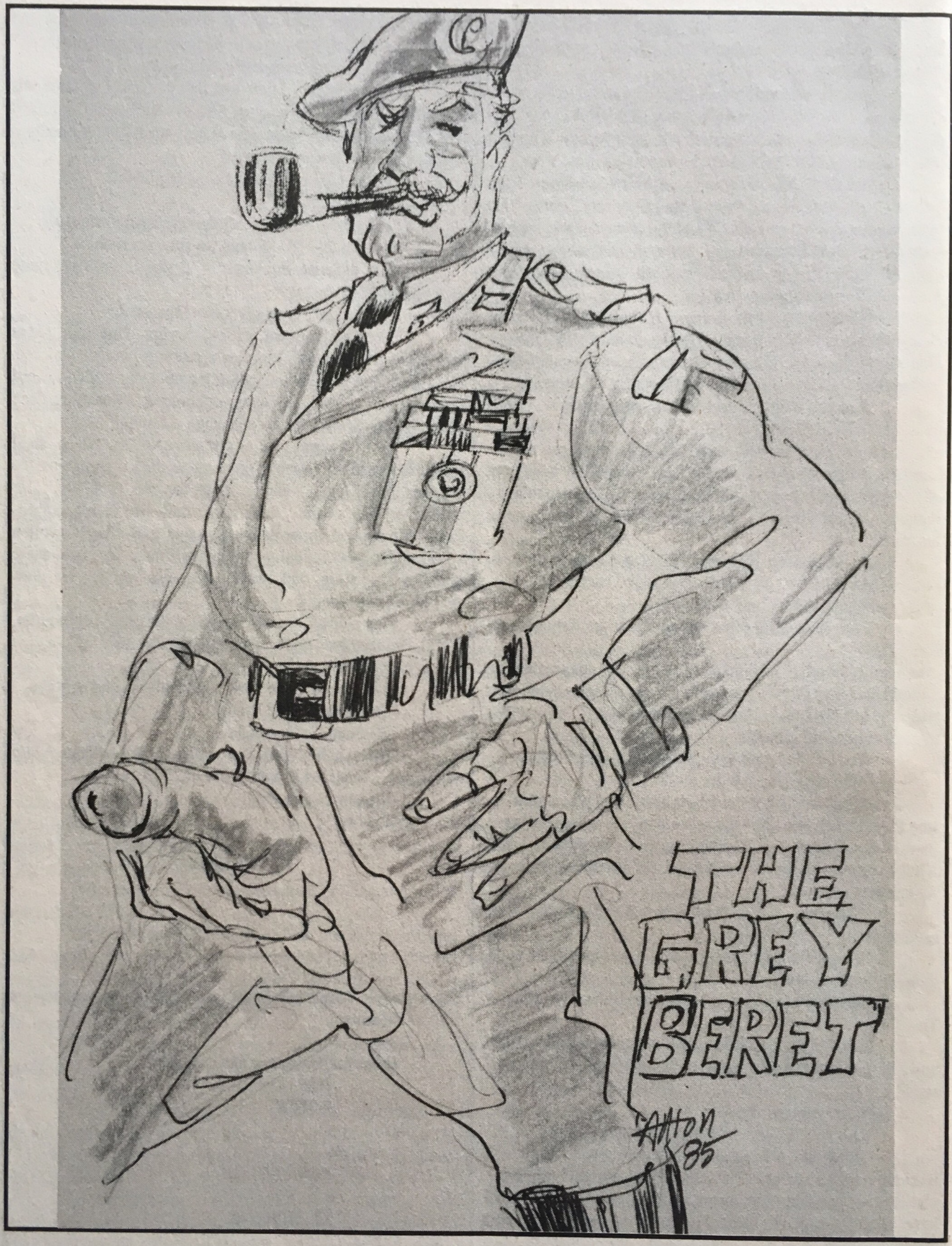
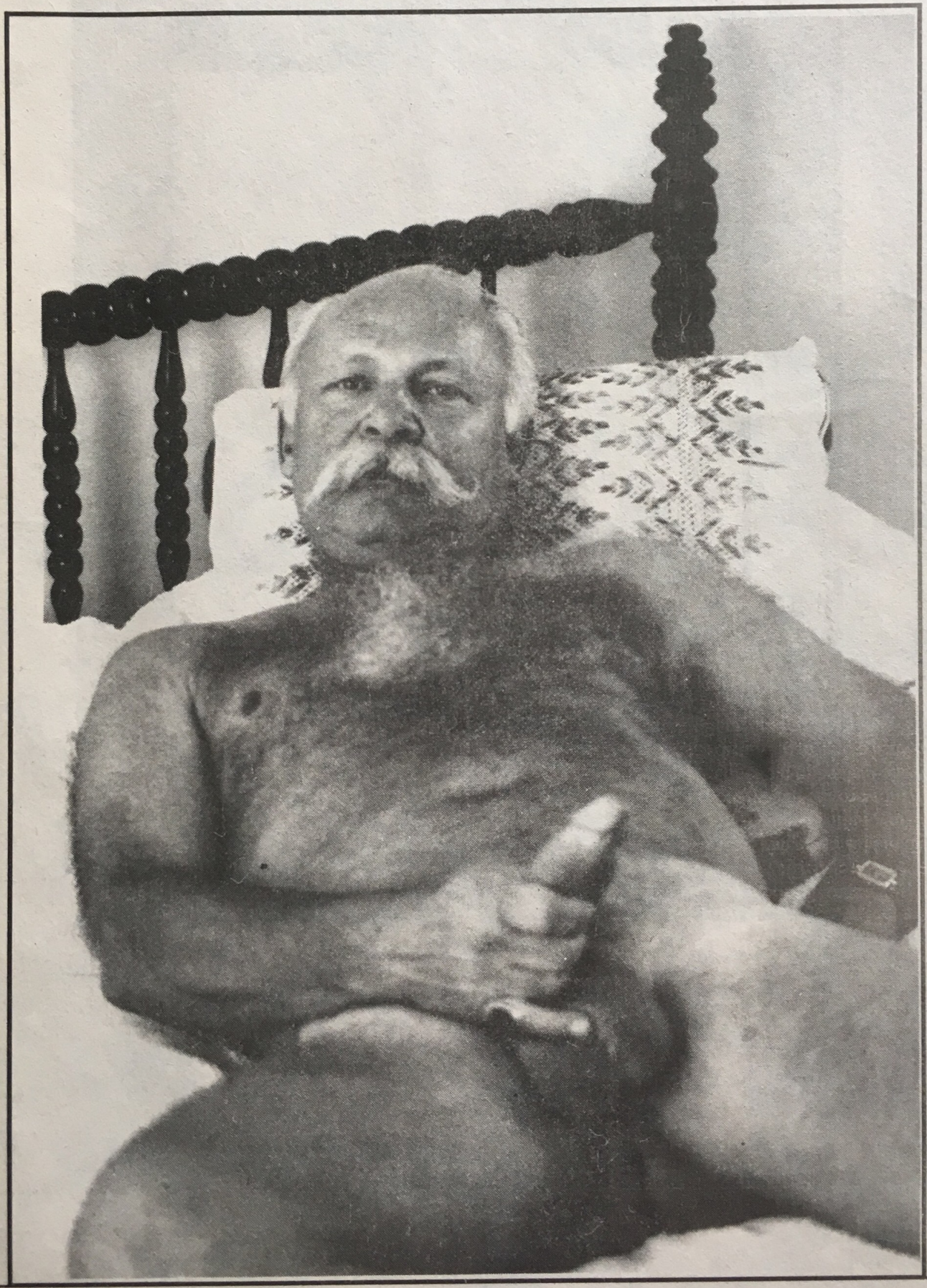
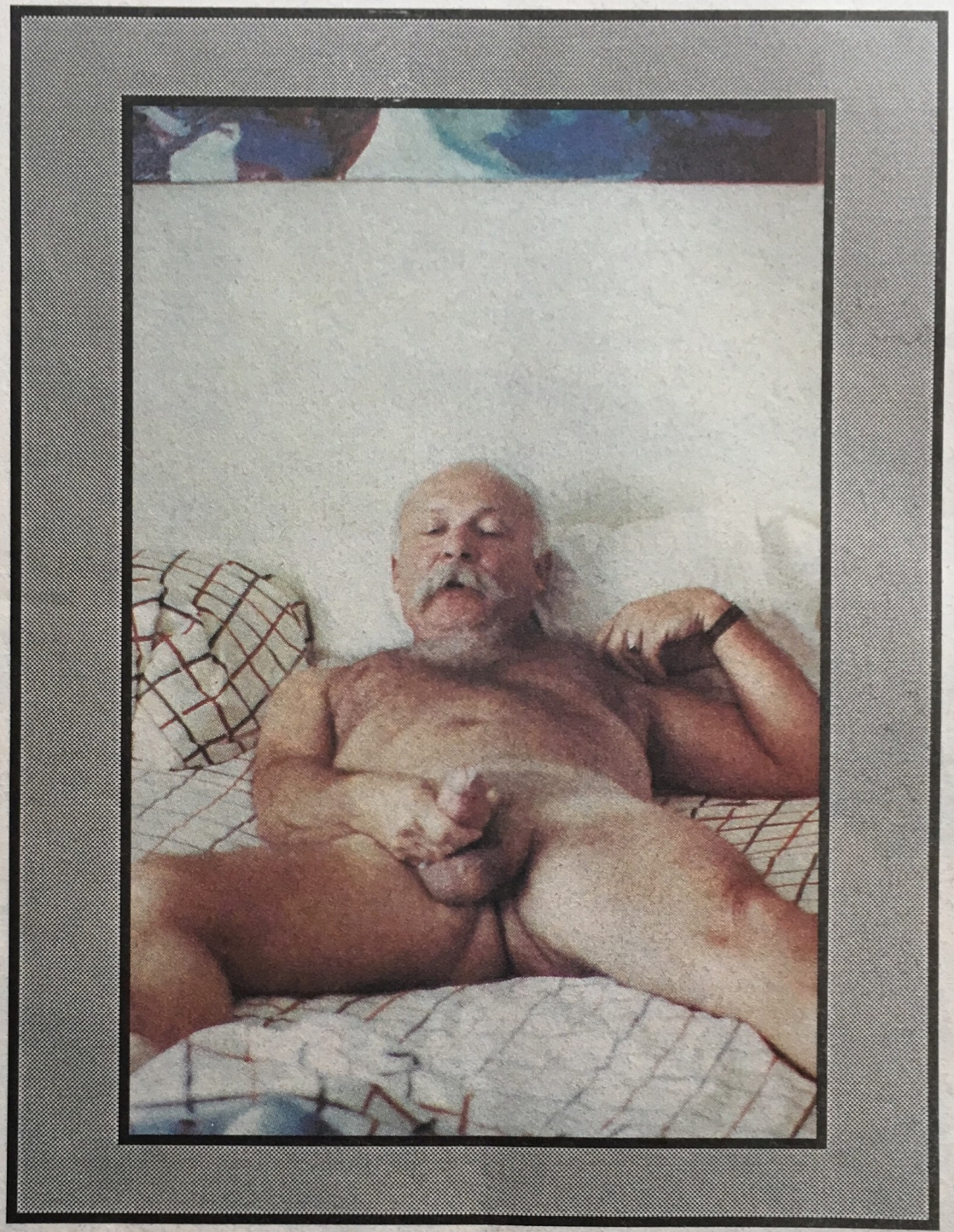


AARON is near 50 and lives in Los Angeles, where he teaches art. He likes his models over 50, burly and very masculine.

KORV





PHOTOS BY P.H. COLLEY

A potter and teacher, KORV comes to us from Southern California. He's single, 5'-10", 190#, clean, HIV negative, honest, sincere, an Aries and of Swedish descent. He enjoys classical music, gourmet cooking and travel.